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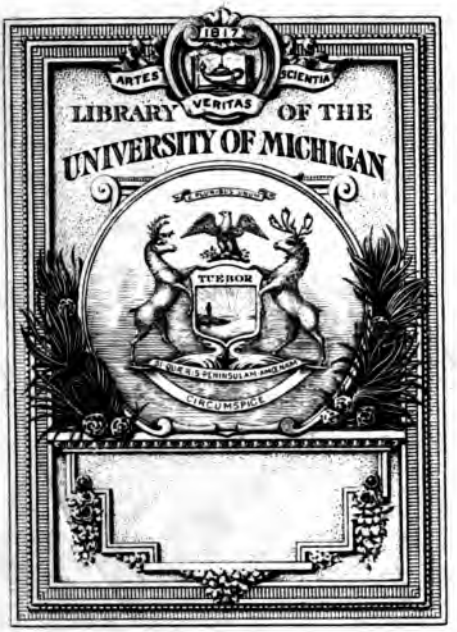
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WIVES OF MEN OF GENIUS

ALPHONSE DAUDET

WIVES OF MEN OF GENIUS

TRANSLATED BY

EDWARD WAKEFIELD

WITH PHOTOGRAVURE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
BIELER, MYRBACH, AND ROSSI

NEW YORK
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PROLOGUE

Two friends, a poet and a painter, were smoking their cigars and chatting together one evening after dinner, stretched on a roomy lounge in the studio.

It was just the time for outpourings of the heart, for confidences. The lamp shone softly under the skylight, casting its glow only over the spot where the two cronies sat talking, and leav-

ing the lofty walls indistinct with their luxurious caprice of tapestries and curtains and festoons, ending above in the glazed dome through which the sombre blue sky could be plainly seen. Only there came half out of the shadow a portrait of a woman, slightly bent forward as if to listen—a young woman with intelligent eyes, a grave, good mouth, and a refined smile, who seemed to protect her husband's easel from blockheads and detractors. A low chair drawn back from the fire, and a pair of little blue shoes lying about on the carpet, betrayed the presence of a child in the house ; and, in fact, from the next room, where the mother and baby had just disappeared, there came at intervals merry bursts of laughter and childish babble, and all the sweet noises of the nest when birdie is being tucked in. It all spread through this artistic home a vague perfume of domestic happiness, which the poet breathed in with rapture.

"*Decidedly, my dear fellow,*" *he said to his friend,* "*you have done wisely. There are not many ways of being happy. But* there *is happiness, only* there. *You must find a wife for me too.*"

THE PAINTER.

Faith, not I—not on any account. Get a wife for yourself, if you must. But I shall have nothing to do with—

THE POET.

And why?

THE PAINTER.

Because—because artists ought not to marry.

THE POET.

That's rather good. You dare to say that here, and the lamp doesn't go out and the walls don't fall in on your head? But consider, for the last two hours you have let me witness and long for this very happiness which you deny to me. Are you like these wealthy wretches who enjoy their wealth twice as much by seeing the sufferings of others, and make themselves all the more cosey by their own fireside when they think how it rains outside and how many poor devils there are without any shelter?

THE PAINTER.

Think what you choose of me. I like you too

well to help you to make a fool of yourself, and in a way you would never get over.

THE POET.

Why, what's the matter? Are you *not happy? In this place we seem to breathe happiness as freely as we breathe the air of heaven through an open window in the country.*

THE PAINTER.

You are right. I am happy, thoroughly happy. I love my wife with my whole heart. When I think about the little one, I laugh with joy, all to myself. Marriage has been a harbor of refuge for me, with calm and safe waters, not one of those where you hang on to the bank by a ring at the risk of rusting there eternally, but one of these quiet little bays where you trim your rigging for new trips to unknown countries. I have never worked so well as since my marriage, and my best pictures date from it.

THE POET.

Very well, then!

THE PAINTER.

My dear fellow, you may think it very con-

ceited of me, but I will tell you that I look upon my happiness as a sort of miracle, something quite abnormal and exceptional. Yes, the more I see of what marriage really is, the more I'm terrified at the risk I've run. I am like those people who go through dangers in blissful ignorance of them, and then turn pale when they see what they have escaped, stupefied at their own daring.

THE POET.

But what are these terrible dangers?

THE PAINTER.

The first, the greatest of all, is the danger of losing your talent and of sinking to the bottom. That counts for something, I suppose, in the case of a man of genius. Mind, I'm not now speaking of ordinary conditions of life. I quite agree that generally marriage is an excellent thing, and that most men don't begin to do much good till their character is brought out or elevated by their family relations. Often, indeed, it is a necessity of their profession. You cannot imagine a bachelor solicitor. He wouldn't have

the solid, respectable, snug tone that he ought to have. But for all of us, painters, poets, sculptors, musicians, we who live outside of every-day, humdrum life, absorbed in studying, in reproducing, standing aloof from society just as you stand back from a picture to see it better—I tell you that a happy marriage can only be the exception with us. For that nervous, exacting, impressionable creature, that grown-up child, called a man of genius, a special type of woman is wanted—a type that is scarcely possible to be found, and the safest plan is not to look for it. Ah, how well he understood that, this great Delacroix whom you admire so! What a splendid existence he had, confined to the walls of his studio, exclusively devoted to art! The other day I was looking at his little house at Champrosay, with its tiny garden, full of roses, where he took his walks all alone for twenty years. Now, that man had the calm and the concentration of an unmarried man. But fancy Delacroix married, with a family, pestered with all these worries about bringing up children, about money matters, about the sick-room—do you believe his work would have been the same?

THE POET.

You instance Delacroix. I reply, how about Victor Hugo? Do you think marriage made it any trouble to him to write so many first-rate books?

THE PAINTER.

I don't think marriage gave Victor Hugo any trouble about anything. But all husbands haven't his happy knack of being forgiven for everything. They have not his great sun of glory to dry the tears they cause. Besides, even so, it must be very amusing, must it not, to be the wife of a man of genius? There are wives of scavengers who are better off.

THE POET.

It's very strange, all the same, to hear you arguing against marriage, when you are a married man and glad to be so.

THE PAINTER.

I tell you again I am not speaking of my own case. I am telling you the opinion I have formed by what I have seen of others—of all these miseries and misunderstandings that are so

common in the households of men of genius and that are actually caused by our irregular habits of life. Look at this sculptor whom we both know. In the very prime of life and abilities, he has just made a bolt of it, and left his wife and children behind him. Public opinion has condemned him, and certainly I am not going to defend him. But yet I can easily explain how he came to that. He was a young fellow who adored his art, and had a perfect horror of society. His wife, instead of getting him away from surroundings he detested, condemned him for ten years to all sorts of social obligations. She got him to make a swarm of busts of official nobodies, fearful looking snobs with velvet breeches, or ridiculously dressed women with no more shape than a sack; or disturbed him ten times a day with bores of visitors; or every evening got him into a dress-suit and white gloves, and dragged him from one drawing-room to another. You will tell me that he ought to have had strength of mind enough to revolt, to say "no" flatly. But don't you know that the very fact of our sedentary life makes us more dependent on our home than other men? Our

home air envelops us entirely, and if there is not a particle of the ideal in it, very soon it weighs upon us and wearies us. Then, on the other hand, the artist generally throws all his energies into his work; and after his solitary and patient struggles there, he finds himself without much will of his own in the minutiæ of every-day life. Feminine tyrannies have it all their own way with him. Nobody is more easily cowed or subdued. Only, take care! He must not feel the yoke too much. If some fine day these thongs with which he has been insidiously bound press him too closely and come to the point of hindering him in his artistic efforts, at one sweep he tears them all away, and, despising his own weakness, makes himself scarce, like our friend the sculptor, over the hills and far away.

That man's wife was utterly thunderstruck by his departure. The poor woman is still asking herself, "What have I done to make him behave so?" Nothing. She did not understand him, that's all. For it's not enough to be good and intelligent, to be a real companion for a man of genius. It's necessary to have infinite tact and cheerful self-denial, and that is what it is noth-

ing short of a miracle to find in a young woman, equally ignorant of life and eager to know all about it. She is pretty, she has married a well-known man, received everywhere. Bless her, of course she wants to show herself a little on his arm. Isn't that quite natural? But her husband, on the contrary, has become more unsociable the better work he has produced, and finding his time all too short, and his engagements exacting, he refuses all such exhibitions. There they are, then, both miserable; and whether the man yields or resists, he thenceforward finds the current of his life disturbed and his tranquillity destroyed. Ah! haven't I known plenty of these jangling households, where the wife was sometimes the executioner, sometimes the victim, but more often executioner than victim, and almost always without ever dreaming of such a thing herself? The other evening I was at Dargentry the composer's. There were a few people there. He was asked to play something. Scarcely had he begun one of those pretty Brandenburg mazurkas which have made him the successor of Chopin, than his wife began to talk, very low at first, but afterwards louder. By degrees the conversation

spread, until, in a minute or two, I was the only one left listening to the music. When it came to that, he shut the piano and said to me, smiling, but evidently much hurt: "It's always like that here; my wife doesn't like music." Do you know anything more dreadful?—to marry a woman who doesn't like your art. Take my advice, dear boy, don't you marry. You are single. You are free. Take precious good care not to part with your solitude and your liberty.

THE POET.

By Jove, it's easy enough for you to talk about solitude. Presently, when I'm gone, if it comes into your head to do some work, you can follow out your ideas by your own fireside, without feeling around you that atmosphere of isolation so vast, so empty, that all inspiration disperses itself and evaporates in it. And then, it's all very well to be alone in your working hours; but there are moments of weariness, of discouragement, when you feel doubtful of yourself and of your abilities. That's when it must be such happiness to have by you, ever ready and faithful, a loving heart that you can always tell your grief

to, without fear of disturbing a confidence or an enthusiasm that is unchangeable. Then the child —that sweet baby smile that's always bright and blooming—is not that the best mental refresher you could have? Ah, I have often thought of that! For us artists—foolishly vain like all who live on success, on this superficial, capricious, and ephemeral admiration that is called popularity—for us, above all others, children are indispensable. They alone can console us for growing old. All that we lose, the child gains. The success which we have not been able to obtain, we may say: "He will have it;" and even as we lose our hair, we can have the joy of seeing it grow again, curly, golden, full of vigor, on a little fair head by our side.

THE PAINTER.

Ah, poet, poet! Have you also thought about all the provender you must put on the end of your pen or your brush before you can rear a covey?

THE POET.

Well, it comes to this: You will have to admit that the artist is made for family life; and that

is so true that those of us who do not marry settle down in temporary establishments, like travellers who get sick of being always without a home, and end by installing themselves in a tavern parlor, where they pass all their life under the sign : "Boarders taken in by the month or the night."

THE PAINTER.

Then they do very wrong. They suffer all the annoyances of married life and never know any of its joys.

THE POET.

You acknowledge, then, that it has some joys?

Here the painter, instead of answering, got up and went and rummaged among drawings and sketches for a crumpled manuscript; and then, returning to his companion, he said : "We might argue for a long time like that without either convincing the other. But since, notwithstanding my warnings, you are determined to try marriage, here is a little work which you must promise me to read. It is written, I beg you will observe, by a married man, deeply in love with his wife, very happy in his home, an inquisitive

fellow who passed his life amongst artists and amused himself by sketching a few of these households that I was talking to you about a little while ago. From the first to the last line of the book every word is true, so true that the author never allowed it to be printed. Read it, and come to see me when you have done. I fancy you will have changed your mind."

The poet took the roll of paper and carried it off to his own rooms. But he was not as careful of it as he ought to have been, for I was able to detach a few leaves from the little book, and I now offer them to the public shamelessly.

MADAME HEURTEBISE

MADAME HEURTEBISE

That woman certainly was never intended to be the wife of a man of genius, least of all of this terrible youngster, bubbling over with passion and high spirits, who went forth into the world with his head in air, his mustache bristling, and his very name of Heurtebise, fantastic and airy, flourished as if in bravado in the face of all smug conventionalities and all respectable prejudices.

How, by what miracle, this little woman, brought up in a jeweller's shop, behind rows of watch-chains and strings of rings—how did such a woman ever contrive to seduce this poet?

You know the style of these saleswomen,—meaningless features; eyes without any warmth yet always on the smile; pleasant, placid face; without any real elegance, but with a certain liking for gloss and glitter, which she had no doubt picked up in her father's shop, and which just suited her in arranging the bracelets and brooches and things on their satin cushions. Add to that, hair drawn back by the barber and plastered down with *cosmétique* on a narrow little obstinate-looking forehead, where the absence of lines seemed to be less a sign of youth than of a total lack of ideas. Yet such was the woman whom Heurtebise fell in love with, proposed to, and, as he was pretty comfortably off, had no difficulty in winning.

As for her, what pleased her in the match was the idea of marrying an author, a well-known man, who could give her as many tickets for the play as she liked. As for him,

I think, after all, her shoppy, false refinement, her airs and graces, her prunes-and-prisms mouth, and little finger in the air had imposed

on him as the very perfection of Parisian elegance; for he was peasant born, and, in spite of his genius, he remained a peasant always. Tempted by the dream of quiet happiness and of this family life of which he had been so long

deprived, Heurtebise spent two years away from his friends, burying himself in the country, in out of the way suburbs, always within reach of Paris, which he fancied disagreed with him, but which he took in a diluted form, as it were, like sick people who are ordered sea air, but are too weak to stand it, and so go somewhere a few miles inland. At long intervals his name appeared in a newspaper or a review, at the foot of an article; but already we missed that freshness of style, those bursts of eloquence which he had been known by before. We thought: "He is too happy. His happiness is spoiling him."

Then one day he came back amongst us, and we saw well enough that he was not happy. His pale face, his pinched features drawn up by constant irritation, his boisterous manners shrunk to a nervous ill-humor, his fine ringing laugh already cracked—everything showed he was a different man. Too proud to admit that he had made a mistake, he did not complain; but old friends of his to whom he opened his house again found out very quickly that he had made a most idiotic marriage, and that thence-

forward he was out of the running as far as a career was concerned. Madame Heurtebise, on the contrary, seemed to us, after two years of housekeeping, exactly what we had seen her in the vestry on her wedding-day. She had the same prim, calm smile, and the same look of a shop-girl out for the Sunday. The only difference was that she had gained confidence. She talked now. In the middle of lively discussions on art, into which Heurtebise flung himself passionately, with his positive opinions, his blank contempt, or his blind enthusiasms, his wife's insipid, jarring voice would break in and interrupt him, compelling him to listen to some perfectly senseless argument or some silly remark that had nothing to do with the question. He, bored and uncomfortable, would look at us apologetically and then try to pick up the thread of the conversation where it had been interrupted. At last, worried to death by his goose of a wife's ceaseless contradictions and utter silliness, he would hold his tongue altogether and let her have her own way to the end. But this very silence exasperated madame. It seemed to her more offensive and

disdainful than anything. Her sharp voice grew clamorous, rose higher and higher till it became quite piercing, buzzed and teased like a mosquito, till the husband, wild with rage, burst out at her in his turn, terrible and brutal.

From these incessant quarrels, which always ended in tears, she emerged relieved, refreshed, like a lawn after being watered; but he came out of them every time jaded, feverish, unfit for any work. Little by little, even his violence was tired out. One evening, when I had been present at one of these painful scenes, as Madame Heurtebise was leaving the table, triumphant, I saw on her husband's face, which had remained bent down during the quarrel, but which he raised at the finish, an expression of contempt and fury which cannot be interpreted in words. He was flushed, his eyes were filled with tears, his mouth was wrung with a cruel, sneering smile, and when the little woman left the room and slammed the door behind her, he made a horrible grimace of rage and grief at her, just as an urchin of a boy does behind his master's back. The next moment I heard him groan to himself in a voice choked by emotion:

"Ah! if it weren't for the boy, how soon I'd march!"

For they had a child, a poor, little, proud, dirty fellow, who crawled into all the corners, played with dogs bigger than himself, made mud-pies, and petted the spiders in the garden. His mother never looked at him without declaring that he was "disgusting" and regretting that she had not put him out to nurse. She had, in fact, retained all the traditions of the tradesman's family; and her own household in beggarly disorder, while she strutted about all the morning in a grand dress, with her hair done up in the most astounding fashion, recalled the back shop so dear to her heart, the rooms black with dirt and stuffiness, where the family just rushed in in the intervals of business to gobble a half-cooked meal at a table without a cloth, their ears pricked all the while for the sound of the door-bell. In such a life as that, the street is all they think of—the street where the customers pass, the idlers, and all that irruption of holiday people who on Sunday fill the pavement and the roadway. Then, moreover, how tired she was of the country, how

she regretted her beloved Paris! Heurtebise, on the contrary, needed green fields to keep his fancy fresh. Paris made him dizzy, like a countryman on a visit to town. The wife could not understand that and complained bitterly of her exile. By way of diversion, she invited a number of her old friends. Then, if her husband was out of the way, they amused themselves by turning over his papers, his notes, his unfinished works.

"Look here, my dear, isn't this comical? He shuts himself up here to write this. He marches about and talks to himself. As for me, I know nothing about what he does."

And it was nothing but regrets without end, wailings about the past.

"Ah, if I had but known! When I think that I might have married Aubertot and Fajon, the linendrapers—"

She always referred to the two partners at the same time, as if she would have had to marry the firm. In her husband's presence she no longer put any constraint on herself. She distracted him and interfered with all work, turning even his writing room into a

gossip shop for her stupid, idle women friends, who chattered away there at the top of their voice, in their utter disdain for the literary profession which brings in so little and the most laborious hours of which seemed to them a sort of capricious idleness.

From time to time Heurtebise tried to escape from an existence which he felt every day becoming more ruinous. He would rush up to Paris, take a little room at a hotel, and try to persuade himself he was a bachelor; but all at once he would think of his boy, and, with a fond longing to embrace him, would go back to the country the same evening. On those occasions, in order to avoid a scene on his return, he would take a friend down with him and keep him there as long as he could. When he was no longer alone with his wife, his fine intellect would reawaken, and his schemes of work which had been broken in upon would come back to his heart one by one and little by little. But what a wrench when his visitors departed! He would have kept them forever, clinging to them with all the desperation of his weary solitude. With what a sorrowful face

he would come with us to the station of the little suburban omnibus which took us back to Paris ! And after we had started, how lingeringly he would turn round on the dusty road,

with his back bent and his arms hanging down, listening to the sound of our wheels growing fainter in the distance !

The fact is, his wife's society had become perfectly unbearable. In order to avoid being alone with her, he adopted the device of having his house always full. His good nature, his weariness, and his recklessness assisting, he

surrounded himself with all the starvelings of literature. A swarm of hacks, loafers, impostors, and visionaries made his house more their home than his ; and as his wife was a mere

fool, without any discernment in such matters, she found them charming, and thought them superior to her husband because they made more noise. The time passed in empty arguments. It was a mere gabble of words without sense ; the game was not worth the candle ; and poor Heurtebise, motionless and silent amidst all this racket, shrugged his shoulders and tried

to look pleasant. Sometimes, however, when, at the end of a long-dragged-out meal, all the guests, with their elbows on the tablecloth round the brandy bottle, began one of these suffocating discussions, as thick as the smoke from their pipes, an uncontrollable disgust would seize him, and not having strength of mind enough to kick the wretched people out, he would beat a retreat himself and remain away for hours.

"My house is full of idiots," he said to me one day. "I dare not go into it." Leading such a life as this, he did no more writing. His name was scarcely ever mentioned, and his fortune, wasted by this

perpetual drain at home, passed into the greedy hands stretched out around him.

We had not seen anything of him for a long time, when one morning I received a line in his dainty little handwriting, once so firm, now weak and shaky. "We are in town. Come and see me. I am worried." I found him with his wife, his child, and his dogs in a dismal little lodging at Batignolles. The disorder of the household, not having room to spread itself here, seemed even more frightful than in the country. While the child and the dogs were scrambling all over the rooms, which were about as large as a chess-board, Heurtebise was lying ill in bed, with his face to the wall, in a state of utter prostration. His wife, in full dress as usual, and placid as usual, scarcely took any notice of him. "I'm sure I don't know what's the matter with him," she said to me with a gesture of indifference. He, when he saw me, recovered a flash of gaiety, and tried to laugh in his old way, but it nearly choked him. As they had kept up in town the same habits they had got into in their beggarly suburban home, a parasite made his

appearance at breakfast time, even in this lodging, desolated as it was by poverty and sickness. He was a short, bald, threadbare, awkward man, who was known in the house as "the man who had read Proudhon." It was by this style that Heurtebise introduced him to everybody, having probably never known his name. If anybody asked "Who is that?" he replied innocently, "Oh, a very learned fellow, a deep student of Proudhon!" His learning did not show itself much, though, for this profound student only made himself noticeable by complaining at table that the meat was badly cooked or the gravy spoilt. On this particular morning the man who had read Proudhon declared the food was uneatable, which did not prevent his devouring half of it himself.

How long and gloomy this breakfast beside my friend's sick-bed seemed! His wife cackled away as usual, with a tap here and a tap there at the child, a bone for the dogs, a smile for the philosopher. Not once did Heurtebise turn round towards us, but yet he was not asleep. I don't know whether he even gave us a thought, dear, brave fellow! In these

ceaseless and pitiful struggles the mainspring of his vigorous nature had been broken, and he had already begun to die. This silent agony, which was more a renunciation of life than anything else, lasted some months, and then Madame Heurtebise found herself a widow. As such tears as she had shed had never dimmed her bright eyes, as she had always taken the same care of her sleek hair, and as Aubertot and Fajon were still available, she married Aubertot and Fajon. Perhaps it was Aubertot or perhaps it was Fajon—perhaps it was both of them. In any case, she was able to return to the life for which she was made, the saleswoman's empty babble and eternal grin.

CUPID'S CREED

CUPID'S CREED

That had always been her dream—to be the wife of a poet. But inexorable fate, instead of the romantic and feverish existence she yearned for, arranged a very quiet and happy lot for her in a marriage with a rich stockholder at Auteuil, an amiable, easy-going man, a trifle too old for her, and with only one passion (quite a harmless and peaceful one), a love

of gardening. The worthy man passed his time, pruning-knife in hand, training and trimming a magnificent collection of rose-bushes, warming his greenhouse, or watering his trellises; and, great heavens, you can well imagine that there was not field enough there to satisfy a poor little heart starving for the ideal! However, for ten years she managed to lead this life as straight and uniform as the gravel paths in her husband's garden, following it, as it were, with measured steps, wearily resigned to the grating noise of his shears that were always going, or of the monotonous rain that was everlastingly falling from the rose of his watering-pot on the smooth-clipped shrubs. This horticultural maniac took the same over-anxious care of his wife that he did of his flowers. He measured the heat and the cold of her drawing-room, which was always stuffed with bouquets; got in a fright lest she should suffer from an April frost or too much sunshine in March; and made her live by rule, always studying the barometer and the changes of the moon, as if she had been one of those pot-plants that have to be taken out and brought in again at regular periods.

She remained like that for a long time, confined within the four walls of the conjugal garden, as innocent as a clematis, but not without flights of imagination toward other gardens, less regular, less commonplace, where the rose-trees might send out all their branches and the wild plants overgrow the trees and be laden with fantastic unknown flowers, blooming freely under a hotter sun than hers. Such gardens as those are never found except in books of poetry ; but she read a great deal of poetry without the knowledge of her husband, whose sole acquaintance with the poets was derived from the almanac, from such distichs as

> March winds and April showers
> Bring forth May flowers.

The poor woman devoured the greatest rubbish in the way of poems gluttonously, without any discrimination, provided only there were rhymes to "love," and "heart," and "sweet," and "dear." Then, closing the book, she would sit for hours dreaming and sighing, "Ah, that is the sort of husband that I needed!"

All that would very likely have remained forever in the region of vague aspirations, if, at the critical age of thirty—the decisive year of woman's virtue, just as noon is the hour that determines whether the day is to be fine or not—the irresistible Amaury had not crossed her path. Amaury is a drawing-room poet, one of those high-souled creatures in a swallow-tail coat and pearl-gray gloves, who go to fashionable parties between ten and twelve, and pour out their ecstasies of love, their despairs, their intoxications, leaning in melancholy attitudes against mantelpieces, under the glow of lustres, while women in ball-dresses sit round in a circle and listen to them behind their fans.

Amaury may pass for a type of his species. He has a low forehead, hollow eyes, and wan complexion, and he wears his hair as long as a Cossack's and smothers himself with pomatum. He is one of those despairing objects whom all women adore, so reckless of life that he always dresses in the latest fashion, a dying swan whose inspired disorder can only be gathered from his white tie being left loose with studied neglect. But you should see the success when,

with his ringing voice, he recites a stanza of his poem, *Cupid's Creed;* above all, that one which ends with this astounding line :

For I believe in love as I believe in God !

I may observe that I shrewdly suspect the humbug cares as little about God as he does about anything else ; but the women don't look so closely into him as that. They take readily to the birdlime of the words, and every time Amaury recites his *Cupid's Creed*, you are sure to see, all round the drawing-room, rows of little rosy beaks opening and reaching out for the sentimental bait.

"Just think of it ! A poet with such beautiful mustaches, who believes in love as he believes in God !"

The nurseryman's wife could not resist him. In three evenings she was conquered. Only,

as there was something honest and proud at the bottom of her romantic nature, she did not want to disgrace herself in a mean, half-hearted way. Besides, in his *Creed*, the poet had himself declared that he only understood one sort of passion,—that which stalked with head erect, in defiance of law and society. Taking *Cupid's Creed*, then, for her guide, the little woman suddenly vanished from the Auteuil garden, and went to throw herself into the arms of her poet. "I cannot live with that man! Fly with me!" In these cases, the husband is always called *that man*, even when he is a nurseryman.

Amaury was stupefied for the moment. Who the devil could have imagined that a little housewife of thirty would go and take a love poem seriously and follow it out to the letter? However, he made the best of his unexpected good fortune; and as the lady had preserved all her freshness and bloom, so well sheltered in her little garden at Auteuil, he carried her off without a murmur. For the first few days it was delightful. They feared the husband's vengeance. They had to conceal themselves under fictitious names, to change their hotel, to

haunt the most improbable quarters, the most out of the way streets of Paris, even the country

roads round about it. In the evening they came out stealthily and went for sentimental

walks as far as the fortifications. Oh, power of romance! The more frightened she was, the more precautions they had to take, carriage blinds down and shutters closed—the grander her poet seemed to her. At night they opened the little window of their bedroom, and looking at the stars which rose above the lights of the neighboring railway, she made him recite over and over again that verse of his poem:

I believe in love, as I believe in God!

Ah, it was sweet!

Unfortunately that sort of thing did not last long. The husband left them too much to themselves. What would you have? He was a philosopher, *that man.* His wife once gone, he had shut the green gate of his oasis and peacefully set to work again to train his roses, consoling himself with the thought that

they, at all events, were too deeply rooted in the ground to run away from him. The lovers, having got over their fright, returned to Paris, and all at once it seemed to the young woman

as if her poet had been changed for some other man. Their flight, their fears of being surprised, their perpetual watches, all these stimulants to her passion existing no longer, she began to understand her situation, to see things in their true light. On the other hand, in the business

of settling down in their little home, and in the thousand and one matter-of-fact details of every-day life, the man she was living with made himself better known every instant.

What little he had ever had in him of generous, heroic, or delicate feeling he had diluted in his poems, without keeping any for domestic consumption. He was mean, selfish, and, above all, very sordid, which is one thing love never forgives. Then, he had cut off his mustache, and that disguise was not at all becoming to him. How different he had appeared to her, with his beautiful dark curly mustache, that evening, when he recited his *Cupid's Creed* between two candelabras! Now, in the forced retirement which he had to submit to on her account, he gave way to all his whims, the chief of which was to imagine himself always ill. Nay, from constantly shamming to be in the last stage of consumption, he ended by fancying that he really was so. The poet Amaury took cod-liver oil, plastered himself with mustard leaves, and covered his chimneypiece with medicine bottles and powders. For some time the little woman acted

the part of Sister of Mercy very conscientiously. Her devotion gave her at least an excuse for her fall and an aim in life. But she soon got tired of it. In that stuffy room, where the poet lay swathed in flannels, she could not help thinking, in spite of herself, of the little garden full of sweet perfumes; and the kind nurseryman, seen from a distance among his grassplots and trellises, seemed to her as simple, touching, and disinterested, as the other was selfish and inconsiderate.

At the end of a month she loved her husband, loved him deeply, not merely with an affection from habit, but with a true love. One day she wrote him a long, tender, and penitent letter. He did not answer it. Perhaps he thought she had not yet been sufficiently punished. Then she sent letter after letter, humbled herself in the dust, implored him to let her return, protesting that she would rather die than live any longer with that man. It was the lover's turn to be called *that man*. The funny part is that she hid from him when she wrote; for she still believed he was smitten with her, and actually in asking pardon of her

husband she was in terror of her lover's fury. "He will never let me get away," she said to herself.

Moreover, when by dint of begging she had obtained her pardon, and the nurseryman—I have already observed that he was a philosopher—had consented to take her back, her return to the conjugal roof had all the mysterious and romantic character of a flight. It was her last guilty pleasure. One evening when the poet, tired of running in double harness and proud of his restored mustache, had gone to a party to recite *Cupid's Creed*, she jumped into a cab in which her old husband was waiting for her at the end of the street, and in this fashion she returned to the little garden at Auteuil, forever cured of her ambition to be the wife of a poet. It is only fair to say that hers was not much of a poet.

THE TRANSTEVERINA

THE TRANSTEVERINA *

The play was just over. While the crowd, variously impressed, were pouring out, surging into the lamplight on the grand steps of the

* Transteverina is the name given locally to the women of that quarter of Rome which lies on the bank of the Tiber, on the opposite side from the old city and the fashionable streets. It is analogous to Bankside in London.—*The Translator.*

theatre, a few friends, of whom I was one, were waiting for the author at the stage door, to congratulate him. His work had not, however, been an overwhelming success. Too bold for the timid and commonplace imagination of the public of to-day, it was too large for the stage front; that is to say, it exceeded the limits imposed by conventionality and arbitrary rules of dramatic propriety. Pedantic critics had said of it: "This is not fit for the theatre;" and the sneering gossips of the boulevards, though they could not but be affected by such magnificent poetry, avenged themselves by declaring that it would never pay. As for us, we were proud of our friend who had had the courage to let loose the whirlwind of his splendid poetry, to risk his best efforts in the false and ruinous glare of the footlights, to present human nature as it is, without troubling himself about the mechanical effects of the modern theatre, or about how his work would appear through dull glasses or duller eyes.

Elbowing his way among stage carpenters, firemen, and ballet-dancers, wrapped up to the

nose, the poet came toward us, his tall figure stooping low, and his coat collar turned up shiveringly over his thin beard and long hair, already turning gray. He looked in low spirits. The applause of the deadheads and the literary men, confined to a small part of the house, foretold to him a short life for his play, select and scanty audiences, and bills removed from the walls before there had been time for his name to become known. When you have worked for twenty years and are just in the prime of life and abilities, this obstinate determination of the public not to appreciate you has a paralyzing effect—it makes you feel positively desperate. You come at last to say to yourself: "Perhaps they are right." You mistrust your own powers. You don't know what to think.

Our acclamations and our hearty grasp of the hand comforted our friend a little. "Really? You think things look so well as that? I have certainly done all I could." And his hot, feverish hands clasped ours nervously, and his eyes, brimming over with tears, searched in ours for sincere and reassuring looks. It was

like the agonized supplication of a sick man asking his doctor: "I am not going to die, am I?"

No, poet, you shall not die. These operettas and pantomimes which run for hundreds of nights, and have thousands of spectators, will long be forgotten, vanished with their last bill, when your work will still be young and full of life.

While we were standing on the deserted pavement, trying to cheer him, to restore his confidence in himself, a loud contralto voice, with a coarse Italian accent, broke in amongst us:

"*Hé!* my author, that's enough *pooetry*. Let us go and eat our *estoufato!*"

At the same time a big woman, covered up with a hood and a red check wrapper, strode up and passed her arm under our friend's with

such a rough, overbearing manner that he at once assumed a look of constraint both in face and figure.

"My wife," he said to us; then turning toward her with a hesitating smile:

"Suppose we take them with us to show them how you can make *estoufato?*"

This appeal to her pride in her cookery was too much for her, and the Italian consented to receive us graciously enough. Off we went, then, five or six of us, to eat stuffed beef with them on the heights of Montmartre, where they lived.

I confess I had a certain longing to become acquainted with this poet's establishment. Our friend had lived in complete retirement, and almost always in the country, since his marriage; but what little I knew of his life excited my curiosity. Fifteen years before the time I am speaking of, when he was in all the fervor of a romantic imagination, he had met in the outskirts of Rome a superbly beautiful girl, with whom he had fallen over head and ears in love. Maria Assunta lived with her father, and a whole brood of brothers and sisters, in

one of those little houses in the Transtevera which have their foundations in the Tiber and

an old fishing boat on the parapet of the wall. One day he caught sight of this Italian charmer with her naked feet in the sand, her red petti-

coat tightly tucked up, and her holland sleeves rolled back to her shoulders, dragging for eels

with a long, flowing net. The fish glittering in the wet meshes, the yellow river, the scarlet petticoat, those beautiful, deep, pensive black

eyes, whose dreamy shade seemed to darken the sunlight all round—the whole scene enchanted the poet, perhaps from its very familiarity, for it was not at all unlike the familiar prints on the outside of pieces of music. As it happened, the girl's heart was free. She had never loved anybody except a big, sulky, rusty-looking cat, also a great hand at catching eels, which bristled up its hair when anybody came near its mistress.

Beasts and family, the love-stricken poet succeeded in taming them all; got married at the church of Santa Maria della Transtevera, and carried the fair Assunta off to France with her *cato.*

Ah, *povero!* what he ought to have taken at the same time was a ray of southern sunlight, a patch of blue sky, the picturesque costume, the reeds of the Tiber, the great nets swinging from the *Ponte Rotto*—the temple as well as the idol. Then he would not have suffered the cruel disillusion which he experienced when in a little fourth-floor lodging at the top of Montmartre he saw his beautiful Transteverina bundled up in a crinoline, a dress flying

loose, and a Parisian bonnet perched anyhow on the top of her massive braids of coarse hair. In the cold and relentless light of northern skies, the unhappy man soon saw that his wife was a mere animal, an irreclaimable animal. Those beautiful black eyes of hers, lost, as they seemed, in contemplation of the infinite, did not really hide a single thought in their velvet depths. They shone, like the eyes of any other fine animal, from insensibility and good digestion, from a happy reflection of the sunlight, nothing more. In addition, the woman was coarse, rough, accustomed to control the little world of her cabin by the Tiber with a smack of her hand, and ready to fly into a tearing rage at the slightest resistance.

Who would have supposed that that beautiful mouth, drawn when silent into the purest form of the faces in the antique sculptures, would have suddenly opened to let out a flood of foul language? Without any respect for herself or for her husband, at the top of her voice, in the middle of the street, in a crowded theatre, she would pick a quarrel with him or

get up a scene of furious jealousy. To put the finishing touch on her attractions, she was totally void of any idea of art, of any sym-

pathy with her husband's pursuits, and of any knowledge of the language or customs of his country. The little French she learnt only served to make her forget Italian, so that she came at last to speak a sort of half and half

jargon of her own, which was inexpressibly comical. In short, this love story, which began like a poem by Lamartine, ended like a novel by Champfleury. After a long effort to civilize his barbarian of a wife, the poet saw plainly that he must give up all hope of it. Too honorable to abandon her, perhaps loving her still, he adopted the plan of shutting himself up, seeing nobody, and toiling incessantly. The few intimate friends whom he had admitted to his inner circle saw that they only worried him, and came no more. Thus it happened that for fifteen years he had lived secluded in his lodgings as if in a lazar-house.

Thinking about this miserable existence, I watched the strange couple walking in front of me,—he, tall, delicate looking, slightly round-shouldered; she, square, stoutly built, shaking her shawl from her shoulders as if it galled her, striding along as independently as a man. She was in rather a good humor, talked loud, and every now and then turned back to see if we were following, shouting familiarly to those of us whom she knew by name, and helping out her words by demonstrative gestures, as if she were hauling a boatload of fish on the Tiber. When we arrived at the place where they lived, the janitor, surly at seeing such a crowd coming in at that late hour, objected to our going upstairs. A terrible scene at once occurred between him and the Italian. We were all jammed together on the winding staircase, half lit by the waning gas-lamp, and we felt so awkward and uncomfortable we hardly knew whether to go up or go down again.

"Come along quickly; let us go upstairs," said the poet, in a low voice, and we followed him in silence; while the Italian, leaning over

the balustrade, which vibrated beneath her weight and her wrath, poured forth a string of oaths in which Roman imprecations alternated with the choicest local billingsgate. What a home-coming for a poet who had just shaken the heart of the artistic world of Paris, and still showed in his wild eyes the dazzling excitement of his first representation! What a humiliating satire upon life!

It was only beside the fire in his little sitting-room that the icy chill caused by this insane affair passed away; and we should soon have thought of it no more, but for the ringing voice and roars of laughter of the signora, whom we heard, all the way from the kitchen, giving the maid an account of how she had shaken up that *choulato!* The table laid, and the supper ready, she came and sat amongst us, without shawl, bonnet, or veil, and I was able to have a good look at her. She was no longer beautiful. Her square figure, large, heavy chin, coarse hair already turning gray, above all her vulgar expression of mouth, contrasted singularly with the unchanging and unmeaning dreaminess of her eyes. Sitting

with her elbows on the table, with ponderous familiarity she entered freely into the conversation, without for an instant losing sight of her plate. Immediately above her head, showing proudly among the dismal old furniture of the room, a grand portrait, signed by an illustri-

ous hand, stood out from the shadow. It was Maria Assunta at twenty. The bright purple costume, the milky white of the folded linen headdress, the brilliant gold of the abundant ornaments, brought out magnificently the lustre of her sunbrowned complexion and the velvety shade of her thick hair falling low on her forehead, and joined by an almost imperceptible

down to the proud, even curve of her eyebrows. How could such exuberance of beauty and life ever have sunk into such vulgarity! And yet, curiously enough, while the Transteverine was talking, I found I could recognize on the canvas the deep soft gaze of her beautiful eyes.

The cheerfulness of the table had put her in good humor again.

By way of livening up the poet, whose failure mingled with glory had doubly affected his spirits, she gave him a tremendous thump on the back, and laughed with her mouth full, saying in her frightful gibberish, that it was no good to be downhearted about trifles, as if the house were tumbling on your head.

"That's true, isn't it, *il cato?*" she added, turning round to the old tom-cat, which lay snoring before the fire, crippled with rheumatism. Then, all at once, in the middle of an interesting discussion, she shouted to her husband, in a savage tone of voice, like a discharge of a blunderbuss:

"Heh, you poet, *la lampo qui filo!*"

The unfortunate man instantly interrupted

his discourse to set the lamp right, humble, submissive, ready to do anything to avoid the scene which he was afraid might occur any moment, and which did occur in spite of all his efforts.

On our way back from the theatre, we had stopped at the *Maison d'Or* to get a bottle of good wine with which we were to have washed down the *estoufato.* All the way home, Maria Assunta had carried it religiously under her shawl, and on arriving she had placed it on the table, where she had brooded over it with longing eyes, for the Romans love good wine. Two or three times already, distrusting her husband with his absentmindedness and his long arms, she had said to him :

" Take care of the *boteglia*, you'll smash it in a minute." At length, going to the kitchen to dish up the famous *estoufato* herself, she called out to him again :

"Whatever you do, don't smash the *boteglia!*"

Unfortunately, as soon as his wife was no longer there, the poet seized the opportunity to speak of art, the theatre, of his success, so

freely, with such vigor and liveliness, that—crash! By one gesture more eloquent than the others, he sent the miraculous bottle in a thousand pieces in the middle of the room. Never have I seen any one overcome as he was. He stopped short in his speech and turned as pale as death. At this moment Assunta's contralto rumbled in the next room, and the Italian appeared at the door, her eyes flashing, her lips swollen with rage, and her face flaming with the heat of the fire.

"*La boteglia!*" she shrieked in a terrible voice.

The poet cowered down to my ear and whispered:

"Say it was you!"

And the poor devil was in such a fright that I could feel his long legs trembling under the table.

A MUSICAL MATCH

A MUSICAL MATCH

How could they but love one another?—both good-looking and both celebrated, singing in the same pieces, living the same artificial and impassioned life, through five acts every evening. You cannot play with fire without being scorched. You cannot say, "I love you," twenty times a month, amid the sighing of the flutes and the tremolo of the violins,

without risk of being seized by the emotion in its real voice. In the long run the divine passion came to them, in the midst of harmonious measures, rhythmic delights, and all the splendors of costume and scenery. It reached them through the window which Elsa and Lohengrin opened wide on the night vibrating with sweet sounds and the twinkling of stars:

> Come breathe with me these drowsy perfumes.

It slid between the white columns of the balcony of the Capulets, where Romeo and Juliet lingered under the glimmering of the dawn:

> No! It is not yet day; we hear not yet the lark.

And softly it surprised Faust and Marguerite in the ray of moonlight mounting from the rustic bank to the window-shutters of the little bedroom, intertwined with ivy and blown roses:

> Let me, ah, let me gaze on thy dear face!

Very soon all Paris knew of their love affair, and took an interest in it. In fact, it was quite the sensation of the season. People came in

crowds to admire these two fair stars, gravitating toward one another in the musical firmament of the opera. At last, one evening, after an enthusiastic recall, when the curtain had just fallen, separating the house, still roaring with applause, from the stage strewn with bouquets, where Juliet's white dress trailed over the scattered petals of camellias, the two singers were seized with an irresistible transport, as if their love, still a little theatrical, had only waited for the emotion of a grand triumph to reveal itself. Their hands were pressed together, their vows were exchanged, consecrated by the persistent bravos still ringing from the distant parts of the theatre. The two stars had completed their conjunction.

After the wedding it was some time before they returned to the stage. Then, their holi-

day over, they reappeared together in the same piece. This reappearance was a revelation. Until then, as between the two singers, it was the man who held the premier place. Beside him, the other seemed little better than a pupil, richly endowed, no doubt, with much promise of future genius. Her untrained voice had angles, like her thin, slender shoulders. Now, on her return, when she appeared in one of her former parts, and her voice came out full, rich, solid, like a stream of pure water from a living spring, there went throughout the theatre a thrill of astonishment so overpowering that all the interest of the evening was centred upon her alone. For the young woman it was one of those hours of bliss when the very air around you becomes limpid, buoyant, trembling, to bring you all the glow, all the adoration of success. As for the husband, the audience almost forgot to applaud him ; and as all bright lights throw a deep shadow around them, he found himself taken no more notice of than any supernumerary in the darkest corner of the stage.

After all, this passion that had revealed itself

in the singer's acting, in the new charm and tenderness of her voice, was inspired by him. He alone gave the fire to those deep eyes of hers, and this idea should have made him all the prouder of her; but the vanity of the actor was too strong. At the end of the play he summoned the leader of the *claque* * and scolded him roundly. They had missed his entries, his exits, forgotten the recall in the third act, and so on. He would complain to the manager.

Alas! He might say what he liked, and the *claque* might do what they liked, but the favor of the public, henceforth the prize of his wife, remained with her altogether. She had it all her own way in the best choice of parts, suited to her talents and her style of beauty, in which she appeared with the tranquil confidence of a lady of fashion entering a ballroom, dressed in becoming colors and sure of an ovation. At

* In the French theatres a corps of professional clappers, having some knowledge of the drama and of music, are employed by the management to applaud at the right moment, and so direct and stimulate the enthusiasm of the audience.—*The Translator.*

each new triumph the husband showed himself depressed, nervous, and irritable. To him it had the effect of a robbery, this popularity which had gone from him to her without any sign of returning. For a long time he tried to conceal from everybody, and most of all from his wife, the pangs which for very shame could not be avowed; but one evening, as she was going upstairs to their rooms, holding her dress full of bouquets, with both hands, and when, flushed with triumph, she said in a voice still trembling from the excitement of the applause, "We had a grand house to-night," he replied, "You think so, do you?" in such a sarcastic, bitter tone, that the truth suddenly dawned on the young wife's mind.

Her husband was jealous! Not with the jealousy of a lover who wants his wife to be beautiful for him alone, but with the cold, ferocious, implacable jealousy of a rival performer. Sometimes, when she paused at the end of an air, and the storm of bravos rushed upon her from all parts of the excited house, he would put on an immovable, indifferent face, and his absent look would seem to say to

the audience, " When you have done applauding, *I* will begin to sing."

Oh, that applause, that hailstorm sound which has such sweet echoes in the passages, in the front, behind the scenes, everywhere—when once you have known its delirium, you can never get over it ! Great actors do not die of sickness or old age ; they cease to exist when they no longer command applause. This man, when he realized that the public were indifferent to him, was seized with downright despair. He lost flesh and became quarrelsome and ill-natured. In vain he reasoned with himself that what could not be cured must be endured ; in vain he repeated to himself every time they went on the stage : " After all, she is my wife, and I love her."

In the falsity of the theatre, right feeling soon vanished. He still loved the woman, but he hated the singer. She saw that plainly enough, and she watched his miserable plight as if she had been tending him in sickness. At first she thought of diminishing her success by controlling herself and using only part of her voice or her powers ; but her resolutions,

like her husband's, went for nothing before the footlights. Her talent, which was almost independent of her, outstripped her will. Then she humbled herself, and tried to defer to him. She sought his advice; whether he thought this was the right rendering, or whether he would have the part interpreted like that.

Naturally enough, he was never satisfied. With that air of affected good nature, that tone of hollow friendship which actors adopt among themselves, he would say to her, on evenings when she had been most successful:

"Keep an eye on yourself, little one. Things are not going quite right just now; you are not getting on as well as you should."

At other times he would try to prevent her singing:

"Take care, you are wasting yourself; you are doing too much. Don't tire out your good fortune. Do you know, I really think you ought to take a holiday."

He even descended to such stupid pretexts as declaring that she had a cold or was not in good voice, or else he tried to get up squabbles about their respective parts:

"You took the *finale* of the *duo* too soon. You spoiled my effect. You did it on purpose."

He did not see, poor wretch, that it was he who spoiled her part, hurrying the repeats to prevent her being applauded, and, in his eagerness to regain his hold of the public, monopolizing the front of the stage and leaving his wife to sing at the back. She did not complain: she was too fond of him. Besides, triumph makes merciful, and every evening her superiority compelled her to reappear gloriously in the full light, out of the shadow where she tried to crouch and to efface herself. This singular case of jealousy was soon noticed at the theatre, and the other members of the company made great sport out of it. They loaded the singer with compliments on his wife's talents. They pushed under his nose the critique of the last evening's performance, where, at the end of four columns devoted to the star, the writer had given a few lines about the declining fame of the husband. One day, when he had just read one of these articles, he burst into his wife's room with the paper spread out, and said to her, pale with rage:

"This scribbler is some old lover of yours, I suppose." To such a depth of injustice had he sunk! The unhappy woman, too, fêted, envied as she was, her name posted in huge

letters on the bill boards in every corner of Paris, and even seized upon by the shopkeepers to puff their goods, or borrowed for the little gilt labels of the confectioners and perfumers, had a most wretched and humiliat-

ing existence. She did not dare to open a newspaper for fear of reading her own praises; she wept over the flowers which were thrown to her by her admirers, and which she left to die in a corner of her dressing-room at the theatre, so as not to perpetuate at home the cruel recollection of her evening's triumph. She wanted to quit the stage altogether, but her husband was opposed to that.

"It would be said that I had made you do it."

And they both continued to suffer this horrible torment.

One evening, the first night of a new piece, the *prima* was just going on the stage. Some one said to her:

"Hold on firmly. There's a conspiracy against you in the theatre." It made her laugh. A conspiracy against her! And what for, in God's name? Why, she had everybody's sympathy, and she had nothing to do with any cliques. It was perfectly true, all the same. In the middle of the play, in a grand duet with her husband, at the moment when her splendid voice, raised to the highest point of her register, was finishing a passage by a sequence of notes

even and pure as a necklace of pearls, a volley of hisses stopped her short. The audience were as much taken aback as she was. Their breath seemed suspended in their breast, like the passage she had been unable to finish. Suddenly a wild, fearful thought passed through her mind. He was alone on the stage with her, face to face. She gazed earnestly at him and she saw an evil smile in his eyes. The poor woman understood it all. Her sobs choked her. She could only burst into tears and disappear, blinded, among the mazes of the side scenes.

It was her husband who had had her hissed!

A MISUNDERSTANDING

A MISUNDERSTANDING

THE WIFE'S VERSION

What is the matter with him? What is he offended with me about? I cannot understand it at all. I am sure I have done everything to make him happy. My God! I do not say it would not have been better for me, instead of marrying a poet, to marry a notary, a solicitor—

A MISUNDERSTANDING

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION

I had thought of everything and taken my precautions. I did not fancy a fashionable Parisian because I had my fears of fashionable Parisians. I did not wish for a rich wife who would bring with her a whole train of wants. Moreover, I dreaded the family connection,

THE WIFE'S VERSION

somebody steadier, with a more settled profession; but still, such as he was, he pleased me. I thought

he was rather flighty, but very nice all the same, and very well-bred. Then, he was fairly well off, and I thought, when once we were married, his poetry would not prevent his looking out for

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION

—that terrible entanglement of commonplace, engrossing relationships which take possession

of you, drag you down to their own level, and stifle you. My wife was just what I had dreamed of. I said to myself: "She will suit me exactly." What pleasure to train this artless intellect to appreciate the beautiful, to

a good appointment, which would put us quite in easy circumstances. He, too, at that time, thought everything of me. When he came to see me at my aunt's, down in the country, he could not find words to express his admiration of the order and arrangement of our little home, kept like a convent. "It is amusing," he used to say. He laughed and called me by all sorts of names out of poems and stories that he had read. I was a little vexed at that, I confess; I should have liked him to be more serious. But it was only when we were married and established at Paris that I felt the difference between our two natures.

For my part, I had pictured to myself a quiet little home, well regulated, neat, and clean; and the first thing I saw was our rooms piled up with useless furniture, quite out of fashion and covered with dust, and such faded, antiquated hangings! It was the same with everything. You can fancy what a grief it was to me to have to put away in the garret a very pretty Empire clock which came to me from my aunt, and some magnificently framed pictures given to me

initiate this pure soul into the mysteries of my own enthusiasms, my own aspirations, to give life to this statue !

She had the appearance, in fact, of a statue, with her great calm, serious eyes, her straight Greek profile, and features slightly rigid and severe, but softened by the fluff of girlhood, that soft down blending into the rosy flush of her complexion, the veriest shadow of hair. Add to that a little provincial accent which delighted me, and which I used to listen to with closed eyes—it reminded me so of happy childhood, the echo of a tranquil life in a far away, little known corner of France. And to think that now that accent has become almost unbearable to me ! But then I had faith. I was in love. I was happy, and inclined to be still more so. Full of ardor for my work, I had begun a new poem as soon as I was married, and in the evening I used to read the verses I had composed during the day. I wished to make her enter fully into my existence. The first few times she said : " Oh, that is pretty ! " and I was grateful to

by my school friends. He declared they were hideous. I am still at a loss to know why. As for his own study, it was a confused collection of old smoky draperies, statuettes that I was ashamed to look at, broken, good-for-nothing lumber, candlesticks covered with verdigris, vases that wouldn't hold water, and odd pieces of crockery. Beside my beautiful new cottage piano he insisted on putting an ugly little thing, with the veneer chipped off and half the notes missing, and so worn out you could hardly hear it. For my part, I began to say to myself: "Oh, indeed! an artist seems to me to be a bit of a madman. He cares for nothing but what is worthless, and despises everything that we could use."

When I saw his friends, the sort of people he invited to the house, it was much worse,—men with long hair, huge beards, unkempt, shabbily dressed, who did not hesitate to smoke before me, and whom I could not get on with at all, so entirely were their ideas contrary to mine. It was nothing but long words, grand phrases, nothing natural, nothing simple, and, with it all, not the slightest notion of the ways of decent society.

her for this childlike approval, hoping that later on she would better understand what my life consisted of.

Unhappy creature! how I have had to drum it into her! After reading my verses, I explained them to her, looking in her beautiful surprised eyes for the gleam of inspiration which should have followed, and always flattering myself that I saw it there. I made her give me her opinions, and I overlooked the silly remarks she made and seized upon the few good ones that came by chance to her mind. So anxious was I to make her truly my wife, the wife of a poet! But no! She understood nothing. In vain I told her of the great masters of poesy, and appealed to her in their most powerful and tenderest passages: the golden rhymes of their songs of love fell flat before her utter dulness and the chill of her indifference. Once, I remember, we were reading the *October Night:* she interrupted me to ask me to read something more serious. I tried then to explain to her that there is nothing in the world more serious than poetry,

THE WIFE'S VERSION

You might ask them to dinner twenty times running, but never a call, never the smallest politeness; not even a card or a bon-bon on New Year's day,—nothing. Some of these gentlemen were married and brought their wives. You should have seen the style of those creatures,—

superb toilettes every day, such as I never wore, thank God! but put on anyhow, in the most careless and disorderly fashion, with their hair all puffed out and their petticoats draggling. Then the accomplishments they displayed, without any bashfulness! There were some of them who

which is the very essence of life, and floats above it like a trembling glory, where words and thoughts are lifted up and transfigured.

Oh, the disdainful smile of her pretty mouth, and the condescending look she gave me! One would have supposed it was a child or an idiot that was speaking to her.

What energy and eloquence I have wasted on her in that way! Nothing I could say had any effect on her. I ran my head perpetually

sang like actresses, or played the piano like professionals; and they all jabbered on every subject, just like men. Is it reasonable, I ask? Ought sensible women, when once they are married, to think about other things beside their household affairs? That is what I tried to make my husband understand when he was vexed at my giving up my music. Music is all very well for a young girl who has nothing better to do. But, candidly, I should have felt ridiculous sitting down to the piano every day.

Oh, I know well enough! His great grievance against me is that I have tried to get him away from this queer company, which I thought so mischievous for him. "You have estranged all my friends," he often complains. Yes, I have done so, and I am not sorry for it. Those people would have ended by making my husband a lunatic. Sometimes, when he had parted with them, he would spend the whole night making up rhymes, walking to and fro, talking out loud. As if he were not odd and eccentric enough of himself, without their coming here to excite him still more!

against what she called common-sense, reason, that eternal resource of cold hearts and narrow minds. And it was not only poetry that she objected to. Before we were married I was led to believe she was musical. She appeared to understand the pieces she played, underlined by her teacher. But hardly were we married when she shut her piano and gave up music. Can you imagine anything sadder than this abandonment by the young wife of all that was pleasing in the young girl? The proposal accepted, the part played successfully, the *ingénue* drops her costume. It was only assumed with a view to marriage, a thin disguise of little accomplishments, pretty smiles, and ephemeral grace. In my wife's case it was a "lightning change." I had hoped at first that the taste which I could not give her, the appreciation of art, the sense of beauty, would come to her in spite of herself in Paris, that lovely city where eyes and intellect become cultivated without knowing it. But what are you to do with a woman who won't open a book or look at a picture, whom everything

THE WIFE'S VERSION

Haven't I had to put up with whims and crotchets from him! All of a sudden, in the morning, he would rush into my room: "Quick! your bonnet—we are going into the country." Everything must be left just as it stood—my sewing, the house affairs, everything—for us to take carriages or railway journeys, regardless of expense—and I thinking of nothing but economizing. For, after all, you cannot be considered well off in Paris, and put by something for your children, with an income of fifteen

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION

bores, who has not the faintest wish to see anything? I realized at last that I must resign myself to have for my companion in life nothing more than an active and economical housekeeper—oh, very economical! the

woman after Proudhon's own heart, nothing more. I would have adapted myself to that; so many men of culture are in my position! But this humble part did not satisfy her. Little by little, stealthily, silently, she has contrived to estrange all my friends. Before her, we used not to be under any restraint. We

THE WIFE'S VERSION

thousand francs a year. At first, he laughed at my remonstrances, and tried to make me laugh, too; but when he saw that I was determined to take a serious view of things, he took offence at my plain-spokenness and my homely tastes.

Is it my fault, am I to blame, if I detest theatres, concerts, and all these gatherings of professional people where he wanted to drag me, and where he again got among his former acquaintances,—a pack of hair-brained, dissipated bohemians?

At one time I thought he might become more reasonable. I had succeeded in getting him away from his evil companions; I had formed a nice circle of sensible and very worthy people, and I had secured some useful connections for him. But no; my lord would take no interest in them. He was bored to death from morning to night. At our little evenings—when I had a rubber of whist, a few friends to tea, everything that could be wished—he came with such a long face and such a temper! When we were alone it was just the same. Yet I was most attentive to him. I used to say: "Read me a little of what

talked just as we used in the old days; but she did not see either the point or the irony of our poetical exaggerations, our wild propositions, or our paradoxes in which ideas were purposely travestied to make them more laughable. All that only irritated and bewildered her. Seated in a corner of the room, she listened without saying a word, quietly laying her plans for getting rid, one by one, of all those who clashed so violently with her notions.

Notwithstanding the apparently warm welcome, our visitors already felt that slight draught of cold air which warns you that the front door is ajar and that it will soon be time for you to be off.

My friends having taken their departure, she replaced them by her own. I saw my home invaded by a set of the most absurd people, utterly ignorant of art, wearisome to the last degree, and entertaining only the most profound contempt for poetry, because "it does not pay." They used to mention before me on purpose the names of fashionable poetasters, fellows who manufacture plays or ro-

you are doing." He would recite his verses and stanzas and things. I did not understand a word of them, but still I assumed an interest in them, and every now and then I made some little remark at hazard; but the only effect of that was invariably to irritate him. In a whole year, working day and night, he had only been able to make one book out of all his rhymes, and that did not sell at all. I said: "Ah, you see! I told you so," for the purpose of urging him to produce something better understood and more profitable. But he first got dreadfully angry, and then fell into such constant depression that he made me perfectly miserable. My friends gave me the best advice they could. "Don't you see, my dear," they said, "it is weariness of himself—the ill-humor of a man who wants occupation. If he worked a little more he wouldn't be in such low spirits."

Then I set to work, and all our friends set to work also, to find him some employment. I moved heaven and earth; I made I don't know how many visits to wives of chief secretaries or heads of departments; I even forced my way into a Minister's office—and all without letting my husband know anything about it. I meant to keep it for a

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION

mances at so much a dozen, saying: "So and so earns a great deal of money."

To earn money! That is everything to these animals, and I had the mortification to see that my wife agreed with them. In this degrading company, all her provincial ideas, her niggardly, narrow views, became contracted into an almost incredible avarice.

Fifteen thousand francs a year! I should have thought, with an income like that, we might live without much thought for the morrow. But not a bit of it. I heard her always complaining, always talking about economy and retrenchment, and profitable investments. In proportion as she overwhelmed me with these stupid details, I found myself losing the capacity or desire for work. Sometimes she would come up to my writing-table and contemptuously turn over my unfinished poems. "What are they worth!" she would say, counting the hours that had been lost over these insignificant lines. Ah! if I had chosen to follow her advice, this precious name of poet, which I have striven so many years to gain, would have trailed in the black mud of

THE WIFE'S VERSION

surprise for him. I said to myself: "We shall see if he will be satisfied this time." At last the day came when I received his appointment in a big envelope with five seals. I went to place it on his table, wild with joy. It meant an assured future, a comfortable livelihood, rest from work, self-content. What do you think he said? He said "he would never forgive me," and then he tore the Minister's letter into a thousand pieces, and rushed out of the house, banging the doors behind him. Oh, these men of genius, these poor disordered intellects who will insist on taking life against the grain! What is to become of me with such a man? I should have liked to talk the matter over with him, to explain how it had occurred. But no. My friends were quite right in saying: "He is out of his mind." Besides, what is the use of discussing anything with him? We do not speak the same language. He does not understand me any more than I understand him. And now, here we are both at daggers drawn. I can see in his eyes that he hates me, and yet I have an affection for him. It is very, very hard.

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION

the vilest productions. And to think that to this same woman I first surrendered my whole heart and devoted all my aspirations, to think that the contempt she expresses for me because I don't earn money dates from the first moments of our married life! Truly, I blush for shame for my own sake and for hers.

I don't earn money! That's at the bottom of everything—her reproachful behavior to me, her admiration of catchpenny rubbish, and so on down to this outrageous step she has taken at last, in getting a berth for me, goodness knows what, in some government office.

I put my foot down there, indeed! That is the only resource that is left me—passive opposition to all her attacks and all her persuasions. She may talk to me for hours, she may freeze me with her cold smile; but she never reaches my inner thoughts, and she never shall reach them. And there we stand! Married, condemned to live together, yet miles apart in sympathies; and we are too weary, too heartbroken for either to hold out a hand to the other. And that is to last all our life. It is too horrible!

ACTUAL VIOLENCE

ACTUAL VIOLENCE

OFFICE OF MAÎTRE PETITBRY
Consulting Attorney

To Madame Nina de B—, care of her aunt at Moulins.

Madam: In accordance with your aunt's instructions, I have given attention to your case. I have taken the facts one after another, and submitted all your complaints to the most scrupulous examination. The result is, upon

my soul and conscience, I do not think that the pear is ripe enough yet; or, to speak more plainly, that you have established sufficient ground for a petition of separation. We must not forget, bear in mind, that French law is very matter-of-fact, without either delicacy of perception or any eye for shading. It takes no account of anything but proof—clear, brutal proof—and unfortunately this proof is just what we have not got.

I have certainly been deeply touched in reading the account of this first year of your married life, this painful year as it has been for you. You have, indeed, paid dearly for the glory of marrying a famous author, one of these men in whom renown and public admiration develop a monstrous selfishness, and who ought to remain single, lest they crush the frail and timid existence that would link itself with theirs. Ah, madam, how many unhappy wives have I seen, since the commencement of my career, in the same sad position in which you find yourself! These literary men, who live for the public and for nothing but the public, bring to their domestic hearth only the weari-

ness of their glory or the gloom of their disappointments. An irregular life, without compass or rudder; revolutionary ideas at war with all the rules of society; contempt for home and its quiet joys; mental excitement kept up by the abuse of tobacco and strong drink, not to mention anything else,—that is what constitutes this terrible literary atmosphere from which your aunt is anxious to rescue you. But I repeat, while fully understanding her anxiety—even her remorse for ever having consented to such a marriage—I cannot see that things have yet reached the point for what you ask.

I have, however, made a rough draught of a judicial memorial in which your principal grievances are placed under headings and set forth in an effective light. These are the main divisions of the statement:

1. *Gross ill-treatment of the wife's family by the husband.*—Refusal to receive the visits of our aunt from Moulins, who brought us up and to whom we are devotedly attached. Nicknames of Aunt Judy, the Fairy with the Hump, and others, given to this venerable spinster, whose back is a little arched. Jokes, epigrams,

and caricatures on the said aunt and her infirmity.

2. *Unsociability.*—Refusal to see the wife's friends, to pay wedding visits, to send cards, to reply to invitations, etc.

3. *Dilapidation of fortune.*—Money lent without acknowledgment to all sorts of vagabonds. Table always open, house turned into a tavern. Continual subscriptions for statues, tombs, and works of unsuccessful comrades. Establishment of an artistic and literary review!

4. *Misconduct towards the wife.*—Having said aloud in speaking of us: "What a goose!"

5. *Ill-usage and acts of violence.*—Excessive brutality on the part of the husband. Outbursts of anger on the slightest pretexts. Breakage of china and furniture. Loud speaking; calling names; low expressions.

All this, as you see, dear madam, forms a respectable body of charges, but yet not enough. What we want is the actual proof of personal violence. Ah! if we only had a blow before witnesses, our case would be a splendid one.

But now that you have put a hundred and fifty miles between yourself and your husband, we cannot hope for an occurrence of that kind. I say "hope," because, the situation being what it is, an act of brutality on that man's part is the best thing that could happen to you.

I am, madam, awaiting your instructions, your devoted and respectful servant,

PETITBRY.

P. S.—Understand me, personal violence before witnesses.

To Maître Petitbry, Paris.

What, sir, has it come to that! Is that what your laws have made of old-fashioned French chivalry! Whilst a mere misunderstanding is often enough to separate two hearts for ever, our tribunals demand acts of personal violence before they will give legal effect to that separation. Is it not degrading, unjust, barbarous, outrageous! To think that before

she can recover her liberty, my poor lamb must go and offer her neck to the butcher, must expose herself to all the monster's fury, and even do something to excite it. But no matter; our mind is made up. We must have proofs of violence. Very well, we will have them. Nina returns to Paris to-morrow morning. How will she be received? What will take place there? I cannot think of it without shuddering. My hand trembles and my eyes fill at the idea of it. Ah, sir—ah, Maître Petitbry—ah!

NINA'S UNHAPPY AUNT.

OFFICE OF MAÎTRE MARESTANG,
Solicitor, District of the Seine

M. Henry de B—, Author, Paris.

Be calm, be calm, be calm! I forbid you to go to Moulins, or to hasten in pursuit of your fugitive. It is much wiser, it is perfectly safe, to wait for her at your own fireside. After all, what has actually happened? You refused to receive this ridiculous and malicious old

maid : so your wife has gone to join her. That was only what you might have expected. Family attachment is very strong in the heart of a young woman so recently married. You wanted to go too quickly. Recollect, this aunt brought her up, she had no other relatives, she — She had her husband, you will say. Well, my dear fellow, we may confess between ourselves that husbands are not always in the most amiable mood. I know one, above all, who, in spite of his kind heart, is excitable and hot-tempered to a degree. I dare say headwork and the worries of authorship do not improve matters. The result is the bird was frightened and went back to her old nest. But don't be alarmed ; she won't stay there long. Unless I am very much mistaken, this lady, who yesterday enjoyed the sweets of Paris life, will very soon get sick of her superannuated surroundings, and it will not be long before she will sigh for her poet with all his turbulence. Above all things, don't you budge.

Your old friend,

MARESTANG.

Maître Marestang, Solicitor, Paris.

At the same time with your sensible and friendly letter I received a telegram from Moulins, announcing Nina's return. Ah, you were indeed a good prophet! She is coming back this evening, all alone, as she went away, without any step on my part. What I have to think about now is to arrange such a smooth and pleasant existence for her that she will never have any temptation to go away again. I have made every sort of affectionate and thoughtful provision for her during these eight days of absence. There is only one point on which I am immovable—I will not have that horrid old Aunt Judy in the house; that blue-stocking of 1820, who only gave me her niece in the hope that my little celebrity might be of some help to her own. Think, my dear Marestang, that ever since my marriage, this spiteful little hag has always placed herself between my wife and me, shoving her humpback into all our pleasures, our entertainments, at the theatre, at the galleries, in society, in the country, everywhere. Do you wonder, after

that, if I was impatient to be rid of her and to send her back to her beloved Moulins? I can assure you, my dear fellow, there's no knowing what harm these old maids may do among newly married people, with their ignorance of life and their wretched suspicions. That one, at all events, had stuffed my wife's pretty little head with the most absurdly false, old-fashioned ideas, a fantastic sentimentalism of the time of Ipsiboé, of young Florange: "Ah, if my lady-love could but see me!" According to her notions, I was to be a poet, such a poet as you see on the frontispiece of Renduel or Ladvocat, with a laurel crown, a lyre on his hip, and the divine afflatus of Mount Parnassus blowing out his cloak with a velvet collar. That was the sort of husband she had promised to her niece, and you can imagine what a disillusion my poor Nina had to undergo. At the same time, I admit I have not shown much tact with the poor child. As you say, I wanted to go too fast, and I frightened her. With her narrow bringing up, and the false ideas she got from the convent and from her aunt's sentimental nonsense, I ought to have tried

to remould her gently, giving her countrified notions time to evaporate. However, all that can be set right, now she is coming back. She is coming back, my dear friend; this evening I shall meet her at the railway station, and we shall go home together arm in arm, reconciled and happy.

HENRY DE B—.

Nina de B— to her aunt at Moulins.

He was waiting for me at the railway station, and received me smiling, with outstretched arms, as if I were returning from an ordinary journey. You may be sure I gave him my most freezing look. As soon as we got home I shut myself in my room, where I dined all alone on the pretext of being tired. Then I locked myself in. He came to wish me good-night at the door, and, greatly to my surprise, went off on tiptoe without getting angry or asking me to let him in. This morning I paid a visit to Maître Petitbry, who gave me full instructions as to the way in which I was to manage mat-

ters—the time, the place, the witnesses. Ah, my dear aunt, if you only knew how terrified I am as the awful moment approaches! His fits

of anger are so fearful. Even when he is gentle as he was yesterday, his eyes flash like lightning. But I shall gain courage, thinking

of you, darling. Besides, as Maître Petitbry says, it is only for one dreadful moment; then we shall resume our old calm, happy life.

NINA DE B—.

From the same to the same.

Dear aunt, I am writing in bed, exhausted by the excitement of that frightful scene. Who could have believed that things would take such a turn, and after I had laid all my plans so carefully! I had arranged for Martha and her sister to come at one o'clock, and I had chosen for the grand scene the moment when we leave the

table, while the servants are clearing away in the dining-room next to the study. Ever since morning my batteries had been all ready,—an hour of scales and exercises on the piano, the *Cloches du Monastère*, the *Rêveries de Rosellen*, every piece that he detests. That did not prevent him from working without the slightest irritation. At breakfast, the same patience. It was an execrable breakfast, made up of scraps and sweet dishes which he can't bear. And you should have seen how I was dressed! —a frock with a tippet five years old, a little black silk apron, and my hair out of curl. I looked on his forehead for signs of irritation, that straight line we know so well, that my lord makes between his eyebrows at the slightest contradiction. But no, there was nothing of the sort. I might have believed that my husband had been changed. He said quite calmly and rather sorrowfully: "What, have you gone back to the old style of doing your hair?"

I scarcely answered him, not wishing to hurry things before my witnesses had arrived; and, besides, how odd it seems! I felt over-

come and shaky beforehand at the thought of the scene I was trying to bring about. At length, after some rather ruder answers on my part, he rose from table and retreated to his own room. I followed him, trembling all over. I heard my witnesses taking their place in the hall, and Pierre going backwards and forwards arranging the silver and glass. The moment had arrived. I wanted to provoke him to downright violence, and that seemed easy after all I had done to irritate him since the morning.

On going into his study I must have turned pale. I felt myself in the lion's den. This thought came into my head: "Suppose he should kill me!" He did not look very terrible, however, lying on his sofa, with a cigar in his mouth.

"Am I disturbing you?" I asked, in my most sarcastic tone.

"No," he said quietly. "You see I am not working."

"No, indeed!" I retorted, now as nasty as I could be. "Do you ever do any work, then?"

He replied quite softly, "You are mistaken,

my dear. On the contrary, I do a great deal of work—only my profession is one of those where we can work without always having a tool in our hand."

Then I went on: "And what are you doing now, I should like to know? Ah, yes, I know; this precious piece of poetry of yours, the same you have been at for the last two years! Do you know, it is very fortunate that your wife had money! That allows you to be as idle as you please."

I thought he was going to jump out of his skin. But not a bit of it. He came up to me and took both my hands in his as gently as possible.

"Must we always go on the same way?" he said. "Are we going to begin our life of quarrelling over again? Then, why did you come back?"

I confess I felt myself a little moved by his sad, affectionate way of speaking; but I thought of you, my poor aunt, of your banishment and of all your wrongs, and that gave me courage. I thought of all the bitterest and most wounding things I could say to him—I

don't know what—that I was utterly wretched through having married an author; that everybody pitied me at Moulins; that I had found all my friends married to magistrates, steady men in good positions, whilst as for me! Then,

if he would only earn some money. But no, he worked for glory. And what glory! At Moulins nobody had ever heard of him; at Paris they hissed his pieces. His books did not sell. And so on and so on. My head fairly went round with all the bad things I thought of

to say. He never answered a word, but gazed at me cold with anger. Naturally this coldness exasperated me all the more. I was so excited I did not recognize my own voice, it was raised to such an extraordinary pitch, and the last words I shrieked to him—I know not what unjust and foolish sarcasm—buzzed in my deafened ears. At last I thought Maître Petitbry was going to have his actual violence. Henry made two steps towards me, as white as a sheet, and with his teeth clinched :

" Madam ! "

Then, suddenly, his anger passed away, his face lost all appearance of passion, and he stood looking at me with such a cool, contemptuous, insolent look.

Oh, my goodness ! my patience was at an end. I raised my hand, and whack ! I gave him the soundest slap in the face I ever gave anybody in my life. At the noise, the door opened and in came my witnesses, solemn and breathless :

" Sir, this is an outrage ! "

" It is, indeed ! " said the poor fellow, showing his cheek with a great red mark on it.

You can fancy what confusion I was in.

Luckily, I had the presence of mind to faint and to cry my eyes out, and that did me a great deal of good. Now Henry is in my room, watching over me and nursing me, and I must say he is exceedingly nice to me.

But what is to be done next? What a fix we are in! And how displeased Maître Petitbry will be!

NINA DE B—.

BOHEMIA AT HOME

BOHEMIA AT HOME

I do not think you could find in all Paris a more grotesque or a livelier home than Simaise the sculptor's. In that house, life is a perpetual entertainment. Come when you may, you hear singing and laughing and the sound of a piano, a guitar, or a banjo. If you go into the studio, it is a wonder if you do not drop into the middle of a game of battledore

and shuttlecock, a waltz, or a figure of a quadrille; or very likely you find yourself among the preparations for a ball—shreds of tulle, ribbons dragging on the floor beside the chisel, artificial flowers hanging on to the busts, or spangled skirts spread out over a group of sculptures not yet dry.

The meaning of this is that there are four great girls in the house, from sixteen to twenty-five, very pretty girls too, but decidedly in the way. When these four begin romping, with their hair hanging down their back, tied up with bunches of ribbons, or else in long tails or loose curls, you would say, instead of four, there were eight, sixteen, or thirty-two Miss Simaises, one as frisky as another, talking loud, going into fits of laughter, all having the tomboy manners peculiar to artists' daughters, the attitudes of the studio, and a cool self-possession which makes them as well able as anybody to

stave off a dun or dispose of a tradesman who has the insolence to send in his bill at an inconvenient time.

These young damsels are entirely mistresses of the house. The father works at his sculpture from dawn till eve, modelling unwearyingly, for he has no fortune. At the outset, he was ambitious and strove to do something really good. Some success that he had at exhibitions seemed to augur an assured fame. But this ravenous family to feed, clothe, and launch in the world, confined him to mediocrity in his profession. As for Madame Simaise, she does absolutely nothing. Very beautiful at the time of her marriage, much sought after in the artistic world to which her husband introduced her, she was condemned to be nothing but a pretty woman at first and a good-looking old lady afterwards.

Of Creole origin, as she pretends—though I am assured her parents were never out of Courbevoie—she passes her time from morning till night in a hammock, hung up in every room of the house in turn, fans herself, and takes her siesta, with a profound disdain for the material details of existence. She has so often stood for a model for her husband's Hebes or Dianas that she thinks she can pass through life with a crescent on her forehead or a vase in her hand; carrying an emblem being all the work she does. You should see the higgledy-piggledy state of the house. It takes an hour to find the commonest thing.

"Have you seen my thimble? Martha, Eva, Genevieve, Madeleine, which of you has had my thimble?"

The drawers are filled to the brim; but though books, powder, rouge, spangles, spoons, fans, are crammed into them pell-mell, they contain nothing of any use. The family have, besides, a great fancy for quaint, curious, imperfect, and damaged furniture. The whole house is very peculiar. As they are constantly moving, they never have time to get settled,

and this festive establishment always has that appearance of waiting to be put straight that you see on the morning after a ball. Only so many things are wanting that they are spared the trouble of arranging them; and as long as they have enough clothes to wear, and can fly around the streets with the flash of a meteor, and keep up the appearance of style and luxury, they are perfectly satisfied. This tribe of gypsies have nothing in their camp to give them any trouble. Through open doors, their poverty shows itself at a glance in the four bare walls of an unfurnished parlor, or in the rags and tatters of a frowsy bedroom. It is the life of Bohemia at home, a life of improvidence and of surprises.

At the moment when they sit down to table, they discover that there is nothing to eat in the house, and that they must go and hunt up a breakfast somewhere outside as soon as may be. In this way time passes quickly, and in a sort of active idleness; and there's some advantage in that. When they breakfast late, they go without dinner, and they leave supper for the ball, where they go almost every even-

ing. Often, too, these ladies give parties themselves. Their guests get tea in all sorts of queer receptacles: antique drinking horns, goblets, Japanese shells, all chipped and cracked by the accidents of numberless house movings. The serenity of the mother and daughters in the midst of all this misery is something to be admired. Bless us, their heads are full of plenty of other things besides household affairs. One of the girls has her hair plaited like a Swiss peasant; another is all in curls like an English baby; and Madame Simaise, sunk in her hammock, lives on the blessed memory of her former beauty. As for *paterfamilias*, he is always in raptures. As long as he can hear his girls' bonny laughter round him, he cheerfully bears the burden of this bewildering existence. They look to him for everything in their lolling way. "Papa,

I want a hat." "Papa, I really must have a new dress." Sometimes the winter is severe. They see so much company, they receive so many invitations. Never mind; it only means that papa must get up two hours earlier. The only fire they have is in the studio, where the whole family assemble. The girls cut out and make their frocks themselves, while the ropes of the hammock grind regularly in the rings, and the father works away, perched up on his stool.

Have you ever met these young ladies at a party? They create a sensation the moment they enter the room. The two elder ones have long been well known, but they are always so well got up, and they have such a dashing look, that there is quite a rush to get them for partners. They are as much in request as their younger sisters, and almost as much as their mother was in her time; they have such a graceful knack of wearing their rags and cheap jewellery, such

a charming carelessness, such a merry, child-like laugh, and such a Spanish way of handling their fans.

In spite of it all, however, they do not get married. Never has one of their admirers been able to stand the spectacle of their home. The drain of useless expenses, the want of plates, the profusion of old hangings all in holes, of antique lustres with their backs broken and the gilt rubbed off, the draughts, the duns at the doorbell, the appearance of the girls in undress, with slippers down at heel and curl papers, everything reeking of furnished apartments—it puts to flight the best intentions of their gallants. What could you expect? It is not every man who is willing to hang up a hammock in his house for a lazy slattern to swing in for life.

I am very much afraid that the Miss Simaises will never marry. They had a magnificent and unique opportunity to do so, nevertheless, during the Commune. They had taken refuge in Normandy, in a very litigious little town full of solicitors and notaries and business agents. The father had no sooner arrived than he

looked out for some work. His reputation as a sculptor stood him in good stead; and as there was a statue of Cujas by him in the public square of the town, it was a question of

which of the notabilities of the neighborhood should order his bust from him first. Immediately the mother hung her hammock in the corner of the studio, and the young ladies organized little parties. They instantly met with the greatest success. Here, at least, their pov-

erty seemed an accident of their exile, and the airiness of their establishment was sufficiently accounted for. These graceful beauties laughed

loudly themselves at their destitution. They had come away without anything. Nothing could come from beleaguered Paris. For them, it gave an additional charm to their country

life. It made them think of gypsies, who comb their beautiful hair in a barn, and quench their thirst at the brooks. The least poetical compared them, in their gayety, to the refugees of Coblentz, the ladies of the court of Marie Antoinette, who fled in such haste—without powder or baskets or chambermaids—that they were driven to all sorts of expedients, learning to wait on themselves, but keeping up the light-heartedness and witchery of the butterfly court of France. Every evening a crowd of lovesick lawyers squeezed themselves into the Simaise studio. To the strains of a hired piano this brilliant company polked, waltzed, and schottisched—they still schottische in Normandy. "I shall succeed in getting one of them married at last," said Papa Simaise; and the fact is that if one of them had gone all the

others would have followed. Unfortunately the first did not go, but it was a very close shave. Among the young ladies' numerous partners, the most enthusiastic dancer among the whole body of waltzing attorneys, barristers, and legal agents, was a widowed solicitor, who was exceedingly attentive to the eldest daughter. In the house they called him the champion dancing solicitor, in remembrance of the ballets of Molière; and certainly, to see the pace at which the gay buck whirled round, Papa Simaise had good reason to found very great hopes upon him. But men of business do not dance quite like other people. Even while waltzing, they make their little reflections. "This Simaise family are charming—Tra la la, La la la—but they may try in vain to bring me up to the scratch—la la la, la la lee—I shall not commit myself until the gates of Paris are open again—Tra la la—and I have been able to make my own inquiries—la la la!" That is what the champion dancing solicitor thought within himself; and, in fact, as soon as the siege of Paris was raised, he made inquiries about the family, and the marriage never came off.

Since then the poor girls have had a great many similar disappointments. But that has not in the least affected the gay spirits of this remarkable household. On the contrary, the farther they go the merrier they are. Last winter they changed their abode three times—they were sold up once—but they contrived all the same to give two very nice fancy dress balls.

FRAGMENT OF

A LETTER FROM A MARRIED LADY

FOUND IN THE RUE NOTRE-DAME-DES-CHAMPS

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FRAGMENT OF A LETTER FROM A MARRIED LADY

FOUND IN THE RUE NOTRE-DAME-DES-CHAMPS *

". . . . . what being married to an artist has cost me. Ah, darling, if I had only

* The Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, or the Street of Saint Mary in the Fields, though entirely enclosed in the vast expansion of Paris since the days of Napoleon III. and the Prefect Haussmann, was formerly a suburban thoroughfare, and is still the centre of a locality much affected by sculptors and artists for the sake of the quiet neighborhood and clear air.— *The Translator.*

known! But young girls form such singular ideas about everything. Fancy, at the Exposition, when I saw the artists' addresses in the catalogue, far away in quiet streets at the extreme end of Paris, I pictured in my own mind their peaceful, sedentary lives, devoted to work and to family affairs; and I said to myself, feeling by anticipation how jealous I should be: 'That is how I wish my husband to be. He will be always with me. We shall pass our whole day together—he at his pictures or his sculptures, and I reading or sewing by his side, in the reflected light of the studio.' Poor little innocent, begone such vain dreams! I little knew then what a studio was, or what queer people you meet there. When I saw those statues of goddesses so shamelessly bare, it never once occurred to me that there were real women bold enough to—. And, as for myself, I—. But for that, I beg you to believe I would not have married a sculptor. No, indeed. I ought to say that they were all against my marriage at home, notwithstanding my husband's fortune and celebrated name, and notwithstanding the beautiful house he

was having built for us. He was so refined, so charming, so attentive. I thought at the time, however, that he interested himself rather too much in my dress and appearance. 'You should raise your hair up like that,' he would say; and then my lord would amuse himself by placing a flower in the middle of my curls, much more becomingly, I must say, than the most fashionable hairdresser could have done it. So much experience in a man was rather alarming, was it not? I ought to have distrusted him. But you shall see. Listen to this.

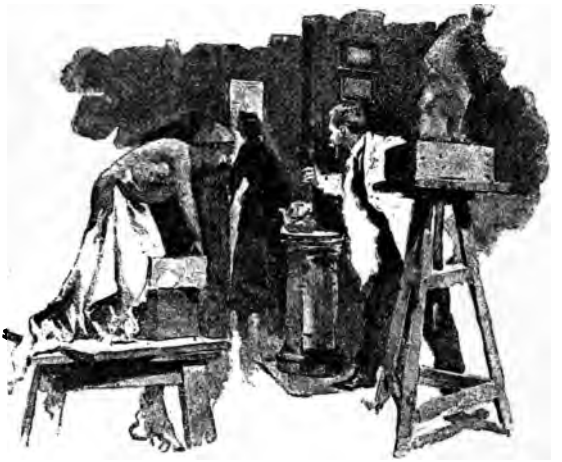
We returned from our wedding trip, and whilst I was settling down in my beautiful rooms—that paradise of art-furnishing which you know so well—my husband, who came

back at the same time, went straight to work, and passed his days in his studio outside of the hotel. When he came in in the evening, he used to talk to me excitedly about his work, for the next exposition. The subject was, 'A Roman lady coming from the bath.' He wished to render in marble that little shiver of the skin in contact with the air, the wetness of the fine tissues covering the shoulders, and all sorts of other fine things that I cannot remember now. Between ourselves, when he talks to me about his sculpture, I do not always quite take in what he means. All the same, I said in all good faith, 'That will be very pretty;' and I saw myself already on the smooth sand of the walks, admiring my

husband's work, beautiful clear white marble, standing out against the green hangings, while people behind me whispered : 'That is the sculptor's wife.'

At length one day, being curious to see how we were getting on with our Roman lady, I took it into my head to go and surprise him in his studio, of which I had not yet made the acquaintance. It was almost the first time I had gone out alone, and I had made myself smart accordingly. On arriving, I found the gate of the little garden on the ground floor wide open. I went straight in, therefore, and judge of my indignation when I saw my husband in a white blouse like a mason, with uncombed hair and

his hands covered with clay, whilst in front of him was a woman, my dear,—a huge creature standing on a trestle, almost entirely unclothed, and yet looking quite at her ease in that con-



dition, as if she found it perfectly natural. A heap of common clothes all over mud, a pair of thick boots, and a round hat with a draggled feather, were flung on a chair beside her. I saw all that at a glance, for you will understand that I was off in no time. Stephen

wanted to speak to me, to hold me back ; but I escaped, shuddering, from his clayey hands, and ran to mamma's house, where I arrived more dead than alive. You can picture the scene :

'Ah, my God ! my child, what is the matter with you ?'

I told mamma what I had just seen, how that frightful woman stood, in what costume. And I cried and cried and cried.

Mother was greatly distressed, and she tried to console me by telling me that the woman I had seen must be a model.

'What !' I said, 'but that is abominable. I never heard such a thing mentioned before I was married.'

At this moment Stephen arrived, looking quite scared, and tried in his turn to make me understand that models are not women in the ordinary sense, and, besides, that artists cannot do without them; but all these arguments were of little avail with me, and I formally declared that I would have nothing more to do with a husband who passed his days alone with young women in that condition.

'Let us see, my dear,' poor mamma said then, trying all she could to smooth matters over, 'could not you, out of consideration for your wife, replace this model by a dummy, a lay figure?'

My husband bit his mustache with vexation: 'But it is impossible, dear mother.'

'Well, it seems to me— Hold, our dressmakers have pasteboard heads which answer very well for fitting bonnets on. Very well: what is done for the head might be done for the——?'

It seems that it was not possible. At least, that is what Stephen tried to demonstrate to us at great length, with all sorts of details and technical terms. I must say he looked very miser-

able. I was watching him out of the corner of my eye whilst I was wiping away my tears, and I saw plainly that my grief afflicted him very much. At last, after an interminable discussion, it was agreed that since the model was indispensable, I should be present every time that she came. There was, as it happened, a very convenient little lumber-room adjoining the studio, from which I could see without being seen. I ought to be ashamed, you will say, of being jealous of such creatures as these models, and showing my jealousy. But, don't you see, my dear girl, you need to have passed through those emotions before you can talk about them.

The next day the model was to come. I plucked up all my courage and stationed myself in my cell, with an express understanding that at the slightest knock at the partition my husband was immediately to come to me. Hardly had I shut myself in when the same forbidding-looking model of the previous occasion came in, dressed God knows how, with such a miserable appearance that I asked myself how I could have been jealous of a woman

who went about the streets without any cuffs on her wrists, and wrapped up in an old shawl with green fringe. Yet, my dear, when I saw that creature throw off her shawl and her frock in the middle of the studio, and undress herself with such coolness, such a want of modesty, it had an effect on me that I cannot express. I was choking with anger. Instantly I knocked at the partition. Stephen came. I was trembling. I was pale. He laughed at me, said something gentle to reassure me, and went back to his work. The woman was now standing up, half naked, with her masses of hair untied and falling down her back with a glossy heaviness. She was no longer the same creature of a moment before, but almost a statue already, in spite of her haggard and vulgar face. My heart was bursting, but I said nothing. All at once I heard my husband call out: 'The left leg—bring the left leg forward.' And, as the model did not seem to understand what he wanted, he went close up to her and—but I could not wait for that. I tapped at the wall. He did not hear me. I tapped again; I tapped

furiously. This time he came running to me with his eyebrows knitted a little, as if from earnestness in his work. 'Look here, Ar-

mande,' he said, 'do be reasonable!' And I, all in tears, leaned my head on his shoulder and sobbed: 'It is too much for me; I cannot stand it, I really cannot stand it.' Then, without answering, he went hastily into the

studio and made a sign to that horrible woman, who put on her clothes and took herself off.

For some days Stephen did not return to his studio. He remained with me, never went out, declined even to see his friends, always very nice in other ways, but looking so dejected. Once I asked him timidly: 'Are you not doing any more work?' but the reply I got was: 'No one can work without a model.' I had not the courage to say anything more, for I felt how much I was to blame and what good reason he had to be annoyed with me. However, by force of tenderness and caresses, I at length prevailed on him to return to his studio and make an effort to finish his statue by—what do they call it?—that is to say, from his imagination; in fact, by the plan that mamma had proposed. To me it seemed quite feasible; but the poor fellow had a bad time of it. Every evening he came home looking drawn and downhearted and almost ill. To cheer him up, I used often to go to see him. I always said, 'It is charming;' but the fact is, the statue made very little progress. I do not know whether he even worked at it. When-

ever I happened to come in, I always found him smoking on his sofa, or perhaps rolling up pellets of clay and flinging them furiously against the wall.

One afternoon when I was there looking at this poor Roman lady, rough-hewn about half-way up, and taking such a long time coming out of her bath, a fantastic idea flashed through my mind. The Roman lady was much about my own figure. Perhaps in an emergency I might—

'What is considered a fine leg?' I asked my husband suddenly.

He explained it all to me at great length, showing me what was still wanting to his statue, and what he could not succeed in giving it without a model. Poor fellow! He spoke in such a wounded tone when he said that. Do you know what I did? Good heavens! if the worst came to the worst—I boldly picked up the draping that lay in a corner, I slipped into my little hiding-place, and then, while he was still gazing at the statue, I came quite softly, without saying anything, and posed myself on the trestle in front of it, in precisely

the same costume and attitude in which I had seen that odious model. Ah, darling, what emotion when he raised his head! I felt inclined to laugh and cry at the same time. I was scarlet all over. And that horrid muslin that needed to be pulled about and arranged on all sides. But, never mind! Stephen looked so enraptured that I very soon regained confidence. Picture to yourself, my dear, in order to understand——"

A GREAT MAN'S WIDOW

A GREAT MAN'S WIDOW

When it was announced that she was going to marry again, it astonished no one. Notwithstanding all his genius, perhaps even on account of his genius, the great man had led her a very hard life for fifteen years, a life harassed by caprices, by startling eccentricities

which had sometimes made a sensation throughout Paris. On the high road of glory which he had travelled triumphantly and swiftly as those do who are destined to die young, she had followed him, humble and timid, seated in a corner of the chariot of fame, in constant expectation of some disaster. When she complained, her relations, her friends, and everybody else were against her. "You must have some respect for his weaknesses," they said to her: "they are the weaknesses of a god. Do not worry him or disturb him in his work. Think that your husband is not yours alone. He belongs more to his country, to art, than to his family. And who knows whether each of these faults which you reproach him with may not have enriched us with some of his sublimest works?" In the end, nevertheless, worn out by so much suffering, she broke out in open rebellion against him, and indignantly asserted her wrongs, so much so that, at the moment when the great man died, they were on the point of petitioning for a separation, and dragging their famous name through the mire of the third page of the society papers.

After the storms of this unhappy union, the anxieties of the husband's last illness, and the sudden blow of his death, which reawakened in her for a moment her former affection for him, the first few months of her widowhood

had the same salutary, restful effect on the young woman that a course of baths might have had. Her enforced retirement, and the tranquil charm of a grief already relieved, gave her at thirty-two a second youth almost as seductive as the first. Besides, black was most becoming to her; and then she had the look of

responsibility, almost amounting to pride, of a woman left alone in life with the honor of a great name to support. Very jealous of the dead man's glory—that accursed glory which had caused her so many tears, and which now was growing greater from day to day, like a splendid flower nourished by the black soil of the grave—she was seen enveloped in her deep sombre weeds, calling upon managers of theatres and musical publishers, busying herself in recovering her husband's operas, supervising the printing of his posthumous works and unfinished manuscripts, and bringing to all these details a sort of solemn care that was like the last duties that are paid at the tomb.

It was at this stage that her second husband met her. He also was a musician, almost unknown, the composer of waltzes, of melodies, and of two little operas, the parts of which, deliciously printed, were not much more played than they were sold. With an amiable face, a large fortune which came to him from a thoroughly commercial family, he had above all a supreme respect for genius, a mania for celebrated men, and all the simple-minded

enthusiasm of youthful artists. Thus, when he was shown the wife of the great master, he was completely dazzled. It was as if a vision of the glorious muse herself had appeared to him. He fell in love at once, and the widow already beginning to go into society again, he obtained an introduction to her at her own house. There his passion grew upon the atmosphere of genius which still hovered in every corner of the drawing-room. Here was the master's bust, there the piano at which he composed, his pieces spread out on all the tables —melodious even to look at, as if from their half-opened leaves the written phrases sounded musically. The very substantial charms of the widow, placed amid these grave recollections as if in a becoming frame, completed the process of making him madly in love.

After having hesitated for a long time, the enamoured youth ended by proposing, but in such humble, deprecating terms: "He knew how unworthy he was of her. He understood the regret she would have to exchange her illustrious name for his unknown and insignificant one"—and a thousand other simple things of that kind. To tell the truth, at the bottom of her heart the lady was very much flattered by her conquest; but she played the part of a broken heart, and assumed the disdainful, wearied airs of a woman who has lived her life and has no hope of beginning it afresh. She, who had never been so happy as since her great man's death, still found tears to mourn him and an enthusiastic ardor in speaking of him. All that, she knew well enough, only had the effect of stimulating her young adorer, and making him more eloquent and persuasive than before.

In short, this severe widowhood ended in a wedding; but the widow did not abdicate. She remained — though married — more the widow of the great man than ever, easily discerning that that was what gave her her true prestige in the eyes of her second husband.

As she felt somewhat older than he, in order to prevent his noticing it, she loaded him with disdain, with a sort of vague pity, a tacit but wounding regret for having married beneath her. He, however, was not wounded at all by it. On the contrary, he was so convinced of his own inferiority that he thought it quite natural for the memory of such a man as his predecessor to be installed despotically in his wife's heart. To maintain him in this humble disposition, she used sometimes to read again with him the letters the master wrote when he was making love to her. This return to the past renewed her youth by fifteen years, and gave her all the grace and confidence of a beautiful, beloved woman, viewed through all the amorous poetry, the sweet exaggeration of written passion. If she had changed since, her young husband did not trouble himself about it. He adored her on the faith of another, and drew therefrom I know not what singular gratification of vanity. It seemed to him that these impassioned addresses of the first husband were added to his own, and that he inherited a whole past wealth of love.

Strange couple! It was in society that they were most amusing to watch. I sometimes saw them at the theatre. Nobody would have recognized the bashful, rather frightened young lady who had in former days accompanied the *maestro*, lost in the gigantic shadow which he cast around him. Now she sat straight up in front of the box, showed herself to everybody, and attracted everybody's looks by the pride of her own. One would have said that she had round her head the halo of her first husband, whose renown resounded all about her like a homage or a dirge.

Number two, sitting a little back, with a countenance impressed with the sacrifices of life, watched all her movements, ready to wait upon her.

In their own house, this oddness of behavior was even more marked. I recollect an evening party they gave a year after their marriage. The husband went round among the crowd of guests, proud, but a little overcome, at having so many people at his house. The lady, disdainful, melancholy, superior, was the great man's widow that evening to the utmost ca-

pacity of the part. She had a certain habit of looking at her husband over her shoulder and calling him "my poor friend," while leav-

ing all the duties of hospitality to him, as much as to say, "That is all you are good for." Round herself, she kept up the circle of folks who had been intimate at the house in former days, who had been present at the master's brilliant beginnings, had witnessed his struggles, his successes. With them she prattled like a little girl. They had known her when

she was so young! They nearly all called her by her first name, "Anais." It was like a solemn ceremony, where the poor husband respectfully approached to hear the praises of his predecessor. They recalled the glorious first nights, those battles which were almost all victories, and then the great man's whims, his habits of work, when, to obtain inspiration, he would have his wife by his side, with all her ornaments on, in a low-necked dress.

"Do you remember it, Anais?" And Anais sighed and blushed.

From that time dated his beautiful love pieces, *Savonarola* above all, the most impassioned of them all, with its grand *duo* pervaded by the moonlight, the perfume of the rose, the thrill of the nightingale's song. An enthusiast played it on the piano amid intense emotion. At the last note of this enchanting piece, the lady burst into tears. "It is too much for me," she said. "I have never been able to hear it without weeping." The master's old friends, surrounding his unhappy widow with their sympathetic condolences, came in turn

to give her a trembling shake of the hand, as if it had been a funeral.

"Come, come, Anais, have courage."

But the funniest part of it was that the second husband, standing beside his wife, looking deeply moved, also shook hands warmly with the guests and took his share of the condolence.

"What a genius! What a genius!" he exclaimed, mopping his eyes. It was at the same time comical and saddening.

A LIFE'S LIE

A LIFE'S LIE

I have only been in love with one woman in my life, said the painter D— to us one day. I passed five years of perfect happiness with her, five years of tranquil and abounding joys. I may say that I owe my present celebrity to her: my work was so easy to me, and inspiration came so naturally, by her side. From the first moment when I met her, it seemed as

if she had always been mine. Her beauty, her character answered to all my dreams. This woman never left me. She died under my roof, in my arms, still fondly attached to me. Yet, when I think of her, it is with anger. If I try to recall her to my mind such as I saw her during those five years, in all the radiance of love, with her tall, lissome figure, her pale complexion with a tinge of bronze, her regular, delicate features, with a look of the Eastern Jews in the swelling roundness of her face, her slow speech, as velvety as her eyes,—if I seek to give a body to this delicious vision, it is only to say to her more forcibly, "I hate you!"

She called herself Clotilde, and at the house of a common friend, where we met one another, she was known by the name of Madame Deloche, and was said to be the widow of a sea captain. She appeared, indeed, to have travelled a great deal. In conversation she used to let out occasionally, "When I was at Tampico—" or, perhaps, "Once in the bay of Valparaiso—." Apart from that, however, there was nothing in her gait or in her

language that savored of the life of a nomad, nothing betrayed disorder or the hurriedness of prompt departures and sudden arrivals. She was a thorough Parisian, dressed in perfect taste, without any of these burnous, these outlandish *serapes* by which you can always tell the wives of officers and sea captains, who are perpetually dressed for a voyage.

When I found that I was in love with her, my first and only idea was to ask her to marry me. Some one spoke to her for me. She replied simply that she would never marry again. From that time I avoided seeing her again; and as my thoughts were too full of her, too preoccupied to admit of my doing the slightest work, I determined to take a trip somewhere. I was making my preparations for leaving, when, one morning, in my very room, amid the confusion

of open drawers and scattered trunks, to my unbounded surprise I saw Madame Deloche appear.

"Why are you going away?" she asked softly. "Because you are in love with me? I am in love with you, too. Only" (here her voice trembled slightly) "only, I am married." She then told me her history.

It was quite a romance of love and forsaking. Her husband drank and beat her. They were separated at the end of three years. Her family, of whom she seemed very proud, were in a high position at Paris, but since her marriage they had declined to receive her. She was a niece of the chief rabbi. Her sister, the widow of a superior officer, was married again, to the head ranger of the forest of Saint Germain. As for herself, ruined by her husband, she had fortunately kept up her early education, which had been very complete, and she now made a resource of her own talents. She gave lessons on the piano at wealthy houses in the Chaussée d'Antin and the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and earned a very good livelihood.

The story was touching, but rather long and full of these pretty little repetitions and these endless details which always entangle feminine

discourses. She took several days to tell me the whole of it. I had rented a little house for our two selves among those silent streets and

tranquil grassplats in the Avenue de l'Impératrice; and I could have spent a year there listening to her, and gazing at her, without thinking of work. It was she who first sent me back to my studio, and I could not prevent her resuming her music lessons. This dignified independence, which she preserved with so much care, touched me very much. I admired her proud spirit, although I felt a little humiliated by her fixed resolve to owe nothing except to her own exertions. We were therefore separated all day, and only met again in the evening at the little house.

With what happiness I used to come home, and how impatient I was if anything delayed her, and how delighted if I found her there before me! She sometimes brought me bouquets, rare flowers, from her rounds in Paris. I often forced her to accept some present, but she used to laugh and say she was better off than I was. The fact is, her lessons must have brought her in a great deal of money; for she always dressed with costly elegance, and her black garments, which she chose to wear with a coquettish appreciation of what

suited her complexion and style of beauty, had velvet trimmings and shining satin and jet and treasures of silky lace, in which the

astonished eye discovered a world of feminine luxury under the apparent simplicity of the thousand shades of a single color.

In other respects, too, she said, there was

nothing painful in her employment. All her pupils, daughters of bankers and stockbrokers, loved and respected her, and more than once she showed me a bracelet or a ring that they had given her in recognition of her services. Except when at work, we never left one another, and we never went out anywhere. Only, on Sunday, she went to Saint Germain to see her sister, the wife of the head ranger, with whom she had made her peace some time before. I took her to the railway station. She came back the same evening, and often, during the long days, we arranged to meet at some roadside station, beside the water or in the woods. She used to tell me all about her visit, how well the children behaved, how happy they all were there. That hurt me for her sake, to think of her deprived forever of a real home, and I redoubled my tenderness to her, to make her forget this false position, which must have been cruelly trying to a woman of her character.

What a happy time of work and confidence! I was entirely without suspicions. Everything she told me seemed so truthful, so natural.

There was only one thing that I objected to in her. Sometimes in talking to me about the

houses where she went, or about her pupils' families, she indulged in an abundance of fictitious details and imaginary incidents which she invented in spite of everything. So calm, she

always saw romance around her, and her life passed in dramatic situations. Those idle fancies disturbed my happiness. I, who would cheerfully have withdrawn myself from the rest of the world to live in seclusion with her, I felt that she was too much taken up with matters in which I had no concern. But I could well pardon this caprice in a young and unfortunate woman whose life up to that time had been a sorrowful romance without any prospect of coming to an end.

Only once I had a suspicion, or rather a presentiment. One Sunday evening she did not come back to sleep. I was in despair. What was I to do? Go to Saint Germain? I might compromise her. However, after a terrible night, I had decided to go, when she arrived, pale and agitated. Her sister was ill; she had had to stay with her to nurse her. I believed what she told me, without having my mistrust aroused by her torrent of words overflowing at the most ordinary question, always overwhelming the main idea under a crowd of unimportant details,—the exact time when she arrived, a railway porter who had been rude to

her, a delay in the train, and so on. Two or three times in the same week she returned to sleep at Saint Germain; then, the sickness over, she resumed her regular and tranquil life.

Unhappily, some time afterwards, it was her own turn to fall sick. One day she came back from her lessons trembling, moist, and feverish. Inflammation of the lungs declared itself, became serious immediately, and in a little time, so the doctor told me, was incurable. I was plunged in the wildest, deepest grief. But I thought of nothing but how to make her last hours sweeter. This family whom she loved so dearly and whom she was so proud of, I would bring them to her dying bed. Without saying anything to her, I wrote first to her sister

at Saint Germain, and I ran off myself to the house of the chief rabbi. I do not know at what unaccustomed hour I arrived. Great catastrophes upset life from the foundation and disturb it in its smallest details. I fancy the worthy rabbi was just going to have dinner. He came out looking quite scared, and received me in the ante-chamber.

"Sir," I said to him, "there are moments when hatreds must be laid aside—"

His highly respectable face turned towards me in blank astonishment.

I went on: "Your niece is dying—"

"My niece? But I have no niece. You have made a mistake."

"Oh, I beg you, sir, forget these foolish family quarrels! I am speaking to you of Madame Deloche, the wife of Captain—"

"I don't know any Madame Deloche. You are making some mistake, my boy, I assure you."

Then he gently pushed me towards the door, taking me for a practical joker or a lunatic. I must have had a very strange look, in truth, what I had just learned was so unexpected, so terrible.

She had lied to me, then! Why? All at once an idea struck me. I drove to the address of one of her pupils whom she was always talking about, the daughter of a well-known banker.

I asked the servant, "Madame Deloche?"

"She is not here."

"Yes, I know. She is a lady who gives lessons on the piano to your young ladies."

"We have no young ladies in the house, nor even a piano. I don't know what you mean." And she angrily shut the door in my face.

I went no further in my inquiries. I was sure to find everywhere the same answer and the same disappointment. On my return to our poor little home they gave me a letter with the Saint Germain postmark. I opened it, knowing beforehand what it contained. The head ranger did not know Madame Deloche either, and, moreover, he had neither wife nor child.

This was the last blow. A thousand jealous fancies seized me at once; and madly, without knowing what I did, I went into the room where she was lying at the point of death.

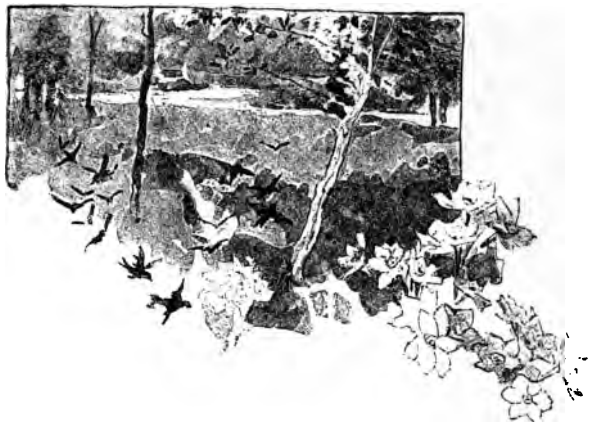
All the questions which had been tormenting me fell on the bed of sorrow together: "What did you go to Saint Germain for on Sunday? At whose house did you spend the day? Where did you sleep that night? Come, now, answer me." And I leaned over her and looked into her eyes for the answer that I awaited with anguish—into the very depths of her eyes, still so proud and beautiful. But she remained mute, inscrutable.

I went on, trembling with passion: "You did not give lessons. I have been everywhere. Nobody knows you. Then, where did you get all your money and lace and jewels?" She threw me a glance of inexpressible sorrow, and that was all. Truly I should have spared her and let her die in peace. But I had loved her too much. Jealousy was too strong for pity. I continued: "You have been deceiving me for five years. You have lied to me every day and every hour. You knew all my life, and I knew nothing of yours, nothing, not even your name. For that is not your name, is it, the name you went by? Oh, the liar, the liar! to think that she is going to die, and that I

do not know what name to call her by! Now, tell me, who are you? Where did you come from? Why have you made yourself a part of my life? But speak to me, then! Say something to me."

Wasted breath! Instead of replying, she turned her head painfully to the wall, as if she were afraid that her last look might betray her secret to me. And so the poor, unhappy creature passed away. Dead in the very act of concealing herself, liar to the bitter end.

THE COUNTESS IRMA



THE COUNTESS IRMA

* "*M. Charles d'Athis, man of letters, has the honor to inform you of the birth of his son Robert.*

"*The child is doing well.*"

The whole of literary and artistic Paris re-

* It is not an uncommon practice in France for a member of the old nobility to recognize a natural son publicly, and, in such case, the child is accorded by courtesy a title inferior to that borne by the father. Thus, the natural son of the Comte Charles d'Athis was

ceived some ten years ago this little birth-notice, on satin paper, with the arms of the Counts d'Athis Mons, the last of whom, Charles d'Athis, had succeeded—young as he still was—in achieving a genuine reputation as a poet.

"The child is doing well."

And the mother? Oh, the mother—the letter said nothing about her! Everybody knew too much about her. She was the daughter of an old poacher of Seine-et-Oise, and she had formerly been a model whom they called Irma Sallé, and whose portrait had been hawked about all the exhibitions, as the original had about all the studios. Her low forehead, her lips turned back like the Sphinx's, the

called the Vicomte Robert upon his father publicly recognizing him. By the law of the French Republic the marriage of a man with the mother of his natural children, recognized by him, legitimizes the children; but the French law now takes no cognizance of titles of nobility, many of which are assumed quite arbitrarily. —*The Translator.*

accident of a peasant face gone back to primitive lines, a turkey girl with Greek features, that swarthy complexion from a childhood spent in the open air, which gives fair hair the reflections of floss silk—made up in this low woman a sort

of savage originality, which was completed by a pair of eyes of a magnificent green tint, sunk under thick eyebrows.

One night, coming out from an opera ball, D'Athis had taken her home to supper; and, after two years, the supper was still going on.

But, though Irma had entered completely into the poet's life, this insolent, aristocratic birth notice tells you plainly enough how small a place she filled in it. In fact, in this temporary household, the woman was little more than a servant, bringing to the management of the poet-gentleman's home the roughness of her double character of peasant and courtesan, and striving, no matter at what price, to make herself indispensable. Too rustic and too stupid ever to understand anything of D'Athis' genius, of those beautiful verses, so delicate and full of knowledge of the world, which made him in a manner the Tennyson of Paris, she had nevertheless found out how to adapt herself to all his whims and all his wants, as if at the bottom of her vulgar nature there remained a little of the humble admiration of the peasant for the noble, of the vassal for her lord. The birth of the child had no other effect than to make her insignificance in the house more marked.

When the dowager Countess d'Athis Mons, the mother of the poet, a very distinguished woman, and in the highest social position,

heard that a grandchild had been born to her, a pretty little viscount, well and truly recognized by the author of his existence, she longed to see him and embrace him. Certainly, for a former reader to the Queen Marie-Emilie, it was distressing to think that the inheritor of so great a name had such a mother; but, following the style of the birth notice, the old lady forgot that the creature existed. When she went to see the child, who was out at nurse, she chose days when she was sure of meeting nobody. She admired him, petted him, adopted him in her heart, made him her idol—this last love of grandmothers, which is a pretext for them to live a few years longer, in order to see the little ones grow and thrive.

Then, when the baby viscount was rather older, when he came back to live with his father and mother, the countess being unable to give up her cherished visits, an agreement was come to. The moment the grandmother rang the bell, Irma humbly and silently disappeared, or else the child was carried to the grandmother's house. And so, spoilt by his two mothers, he liked one as well as the other, and

was rather astonished to feel in the warmth of the caresses of each a wish to monopolize him to the exclusion of the other. D'Athis, taking no heed of such matters, and absorbed in his

poetry and his growing fame, contented himself with adoring his little Robert, talking about him to everybody, and imagining that the child was all for him, for him alone. This illusion did not last long.

"I want to see you married," his mother said to him one day.

"Yes? But how about the child?"

"Do not trouble yourself. I have found a young lady of noble birth for you; she is not

well off, and she adores you. I have made her acquainted with Robert, and they are already good friends. Besides, for the first year I will keep the child with me. After that, we shall see."

"And the—the girl?" the poet ventured to say, reddening a little, for it was the first time he had ever mentioned Irma to his mother.

"Bah!" replied the old dowager, laughing, "we will make a comfortable provision for her, and I feel pretty certain she, too, will find somebody to marry. The Paris shopkeeper is not fastidious."

The same evening D'Athis, who had never been very much in love with his mistress, spoke to her about these proposals, and found her submissive and ready for everything, as she always was. But the next day, when he came home, mother and child were gone. They discovered them at last with Irma's father, in a wretched little cabin on the borders of the forest of Rambouillet; and when the poet arrived, his son, his little prince, all in velvet and lace, was jumping on the old poacher's knees, playing with his pipe, or running after the fowls, delighted to shake his yellow curls in the country air. D'Athis, though he was very much upset, was willing to laugh at the whole affair, and to take his two fugitives back with him, then and there. But Irma did not

see things in the same light at all. They had turned her out of the house; she had brought her child with her. What could be more natural? Nothing less than a promise on the poet's part that he would give up his marriage would induce her to return. Even then she made conditions. It had been too long forgotten that she was Robert's mother. Always to be hiding herself, and disappearing when Madame d'Athis arrived—such a life as that was no longer possible. The child was growing too big for her to be exposed to such humiliations before him. It was agreed that, since Madame d'Athis would not meet her son's mistress, she should no longer come to the house, but the child should be taken to her every day.

Then began a veritable purgatory for the old grandame. Every day there was some pretext for thwarting her. The child had a cough; it was too cold for him to go out; it was a wet day. Then there were his walks, the riding-school, the gymnasium. The poor old woman never saw her grandson at all. At first she was inclined to complain to D'Athis; but

women keep the secrets of their little wars to themselves. Their tactics remain unseen, like the hidden pins with which they fasten their ribbons and laces when dressing. The poet

was not likely to notice anything himself, and the sorrowing grandmother passed her life waiting for her darling's visits, or lying in wait for him when he went for a walk with a servant. These stolen kisses and hurried glimpses

only increased her motherly fondness, without enabling her to gratify it.

During all this time, Irma Sallé—always by the help of the child—was making her way in the father's heart. She now took her position as the head of the house, received her guests,

gave parties, and settled herself down like a woman who means to stay. Nevertheless, she took care to say to the little viscount from time to time before his father : " Do you recollect grandpapa Sallé's fowls ? Would you like us to go down and see them again ? " And by

this eternal threat of departure, she paved the way for her final object of marriage.

It took her five years to become a countess, but she was one at last. One day the poet came trembling to his mother, to inform her that he had decided to marry his mistress; and the old lady, instead of being angry about it, welcomed this calamity as a deliverance. She saw but one thing in the marriage, the possibility of returning to her son's house and freely indulging her love for her little Robert. The fact is, the real honeymoon was for the grandmother. D'Athis, after his rash act, was anxious to get away from Paris for a time. He felt awkward there. And as the child, hanging on to his mother's petticoats, led the whole family, they went down to Irma's part of the country and set up an establishment side by side with father Sallé's poultry yard. It was a curious household, indeed, the most discrepant that could well be imagined. D'Athis' dear old mother and grandpapa Sallé met every evening to see their grandson to bed. The old poacher, with his short black pipe riveted in the corner of his mouth; the quondam

reader at the palace, with her powdered hair and her grand manners,—sat together watching the pretty child rolling before them on the carpet, and both admiring him equally. One brought him all the newest, gayest, and most costly toys from Paris; the other cut out for him magnificent whistles from elder boughs; and, will you believe it, my lord did not know which he liked best.

In a word, amongst all these beings gathered as if by force round a cradle, the only unhappy one was Charles d'Athis. His refined and patrician intellect suffered from this life in the woods, like those delicate Parisian ladies for whom the country air is too strong and growing. He no longer did any work, and, far from this terrible Paris, which closes so quickly upon the absent, he felt himself almost forgotten already. Happily the child was there, and when the child smiled the father thought no more of his success as a poet or of Irma Sallé's antecedents.

And now, would you like to know the catastrophe of this singular drama? Read this little black-edged note, which I received a few

days ago, and which is like the last page of this Parisian romance :

"*The Count and Countess d'Athis have the grief to inform you of the death of their son Robert.*"

Unhappy people ! There they are down there, all four, staring at one another before an empty cradle.

THE CONFIDENCES

OF A COAT WITH GREEN PALMS

THE CONFIDENCES OF A COAT WITH GREEN PALMS *

That morning was the morning of a fine day for the sculptor Guillardin.

He had been nominated a member of the

* A trophy or garland of palm branches forms the special emblem of distinction in the fine arts in the Institute of France, the supreme tribunal and fountain

institute the evening before, and he was going to inaugurate his official uniform before the five academies gathered in solemn assembly,—his uniform of an academician, a magnificent coat with green palms, all shining with new cloth and silk embroidery of the color of hope. The blessed coat, open, ready to put on, was spread on an armchair, and Guillardin was looking at it with loving eyes, while putting the finishing touches to the bow of his white cravat.

"Above all, don't let us be in a hurry; I have plenty of time," thought the worthy man.

The fact is, that in his feverish impatience he had dressed himself two hours too soon; and the beautiful Madame Guillardin—who always took a long time dressing—had informed him that that day especially she would not be ready until the exact hour—"not a minute before, understand."

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of honor in arts and sciences. When any one attains the proud position of a member of the institute, he becomes entitled to wear an official uniform of green cloth, embroidered with green palm branches, and also to wear with ordinary dress a decoration consisting of a garland of green palms.—*The Translator.*

Unfortunate Guillardin! What was he to do to kill the time till then? "Let us try on our coat," he said to himself; and gently, as if

he were handling tulle or lace, he took up the precious garment, and having put it on with infinite precautions, he came and placed himself before the looking-glass. Oh, the noble

figure that the looking-glass reflected! What a charming little academician, new laid, sleek, happy, smiling, turning slightly gray, and perhaps rather fat, with short arms which gave him a stiff, automatic sort of dignity in their new sleeves. Evidently well pleased with his appearance, Guillardin walked to and fro, made his bow as if he were entering a session of the institute, smiled at his colleagues in the fine arts, and threw himself into academic attitudes. But no matter how proud of himself a man may be, he cannot stand in full fig before a looking-glass for two hours. At length our academician got tired of that, and fearing to rumple his coat, he decided to take it off again and put it back as it was before, carefully arranged on an armchair.

He himself sat down in front of it, on the other side of the fireplace; then, with his legs stretched out and his two hands crossed on his dress waistcoat, he abandoned himself to delicious reflections while looking at his green coat.

As the traveller who has arrived at the end of his journey likes to recall the perils and

difficulties of the voyage, Guillardin took his life, year by year, from the day when he had begun as a sculptor in the Jouffroy studio. Ah, there are hard times at the beginning in this cursed profession! He looked back to the winters without fire, the nights without sleep,

the wanderings in search of work, the dull rage you experience when you feel how small you are—lost, unknown in the teeming crowd who shove you and hustle you and upset you and overwhelm you. To think, however, that he had succeeded in getting over that, all alone,

without patrons, without money. Nothing but talent, sir! And with his head thrown back and his eyes half closed, plunged in blessed contemplation, the worthy man repeated aloud to himself: "Only by my own talent; only by my own tal—"

A long peal of laughter, dry and broken, like an old man's laugh, suddenly interrupted him. Guillardin, thunderstruck, gazed round him in the room. He was alone, quite alone, with his green coat, that shade of an academician solemnly spread out in front of him on the other side of the fire. Yet the jeering laughter went on without ceasing. Then, when he came to look closer, the sculptor thought he noticed that the coat was no longer in its place as he had put it, but was actually seated in the chair, with its tails lifted up, its sleeves resting on the arms, and the breast puffed out with an appearance of life. Incredible as it might seem, it was the coat that laughed. Yes, it was from this extraordinary green coat that came these bursts of insane laughter, which shook its sides, twisted it, so that it almost rolled off its chair, made its

skirts flutter, and at some moments drew its sleeves to its sides as if to stop this excess of supernatural and inextinguishable merriment. At the same time there was a sound like a weak, sly, spiteful voice saying, between two bursts of laughter :

" My God, my God, how bad it makes me to laugh ! How it hurts to laugh like that ! "

" Who the devil are you, when you have quite done ? " asked the poor academician, opening his eyes wide.

The voice replied, still slyly and sneeringly : " It is I, Monsieur Guillardin, it is I, your coat with palms, I who am waiting for you to go to the meeting. I beg your pardon for my untimely interruption of your reflections, but truly it was so comical to hear you talking about your talent ! I could not hold myself in.

" Come, do you mean to say you are in earnest ? Do you conscientiously believe that your talent has sufficed to bring you on so quickly, so far and so high in the world, to give you all that you possess, honors, position, fame, fortune ? Do you think that is possible, Guillardin ? Look down into yourself, my

friend, before replying. Look down deeper, still deeper. There! Now answer me. You know very well you dare not."

"But," stammered Guillardin, with ludicrous hesitation, "I have—I have—worked very hard."

"Yes, you have worked hard, you have worked enormously. You work like a navvy; you would make a fine stone-mason, you can get through any quantity of hard labor. You count your days by the hour, like a cab driver. But the spark of genius, my dear fellow, the golden bee that flies through the brain of the genuine artist, carrying light in the buzzing of its wings, when did it ever pay you a visit? Never once, you know quite well. It always frightened you, the divine little bee. Yet it is that alone which gives real talent. Ah! I know plenty of men who work as hard as you ever did, though very differently, with all the patience, all the ardor of seekers after fortune, but who will never be where you are. See here! Let us agree on one point, as we are alone. What your talent consists in, is having married a pretty woman."

"Sir!" exclaimed Guillardin, flushing up.

The voice went on without being disturbed:

"That's all right! I am pleased to see you so angry. It proves to me what all the world

knows, in any case; namely, that you are more fool than rogue. There, there, you have no occasion to make such furious eyes at me. In the first place, if you touch me, if I have a single rumple or rent, you won't be able to

go to the meeting, and Madame Guillardin will not be pleased at that. For, after all, it is to her that belongs all the glory of this memorable day. It is she whom the five academies are going to receive presently; and I tell you, that if I went to the institute slipped over her pretty figure, always so slim and upright notwithstanding her age, I should have a very different success from what I shall have with you. What the devil does it matter, Monsieur Guillardin! You must give an account of these things to yourself. You know you owe everything to that woman—everything, the house you live in, your income of forty thousand francs a year, your crosses, your laurels, your medals."

And with a gesture of its cuff, the green coat with its embroidered sleeves showed the unhappy sculptor the rich frames hanging on the wall of his room. Then, as if he wished, by way of torturing his victim the more, to take his case in all its aspects and attitudes, this cruel coat came near the fire, and leaning forward in its armchair, in a confidential sort of way, it spoke familiarly in the tone of an old comrade:

"Come, my friend, that seems to give you pain, what I said just now. But it is just as well that you should know what everybody else knows. And who should tell you if not your coat? Now, let us consider a little. How much had you when you were married? Nothing. How much did your wife bring you? Zero. Then, how do you explain the large fortune you have now? You are going to tell me again you have worked very hard. But, you humbug, working night and day, with all sorts of advantages and plenty of orders from the government, which have certainly not been wanting since your marriage, you never earned more than fifteen thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that was enough in a house like yours? Remember that the beautiful Madame Guillardin has always been considered a lady of fashion, moving in the most expensive circles. Gad! I know well enough that you, boxed up in your studio there from morning to night, never thought about those things. You were content to say to your friends:

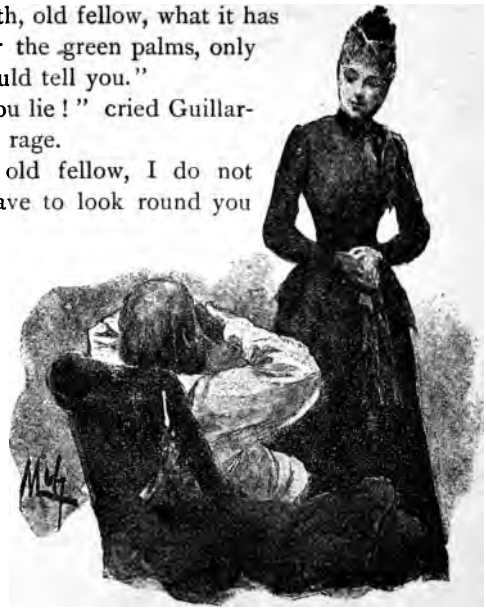
"'My wife is a surprising woman for household affairs. She manages to save something

out of what I earn, even living at the rate that we do.' It is you who were a surprising man, my poor fellow. The truth is, you married one of these fair monsters who are to be found in Paris, a woman at once ambitious and loose, jealous for your reputation, but careless of her own, knowing how to look after your prosperity whilst indulging her own pleasures. The life of these women, my dear fellow, is like a programme at a ball, on which they would write so many figures against the name of each of their partners. Your wife has reasoned it out with herself like this: 'My husband has no brains, no money, no advantages of any sort; but he is an excellent man, obliging, credulous, as little in the way as he could possibly be. If he will leave me alone to amuse myself as I please, I will undertake, on my part, to give him all that he wants.' And from that day forward, money, commissions, decorations of all countries began to pour into your studio with their pleasant metallic sound and their ribbons of all colors. Look at me, for instance. Well, one morning your wife took a fancy—the fancy of mature beauty—to be the wife of an

academician, and it was her neatly gloved hand that opened the doors of the sanctuary to you, one by one. Faith, old fellow, what it has cost you to wear the green palms, only your colleages could tell you."

"You lie! You lie!" cried Guillardin, choking with rage.

"What? No, old fellow, I do not lie. You only have to look round you presently, when you arrive at the meeting. You will see malicious glances in all their eyes, and smiles at the corners of all their lips, while they whisper as you pass along: 'There's the lovely Madame Guillardin's husband.' For you will never in all your life be anything else than that, my dear sir,—the husband of a pretty woman."



At this last stroke, Guillardin could contain himself no longer. White with rage, he sprang forward, and was going to seize his insulting and lying coat, with the intention of flinging it into the fire after removing its beautiful green garland; but at that moment a door opened, and a well-known voice woke him from his horrible dream by saying half contemptuously and half in gentle condescension:

"Ah, that is just like you, now!—to fall asleep before the fire on such a day as this."

Madame Guillardin stood before him, tall, still beautiful, though a little too imposing with her scarcely natural color, her powdered hair, and the exaggerated brightness of her pencilled eyes. With the gesture of a woman who is mistress, she took the coat with green palms, and, with a slight smile, she nimbly helped her husband to put it on; while the poor man, still dripping with perspiration from his nightmare, drew a long breath with an air of relief, and thought within himself, "What happiness! It was a dream."